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# The Rationalist Press Association

LIMITED

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<sup>5</sup> This information, when given, is filed for reference purposes. It is sometimes useful for the Association to be able to refer to professional men or tradesmen in a particular town.

# THE RATIONALIST ANNUAL

For the Year 1936

EDITED BY CHARLES A. WATTS

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## **SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY,**

**CONWAY HALL,**

**RED LION SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.1**

### **Objects of the Society**

The Objects of the Society are the study and dissemination of ethical principles and the cultivation of a rational religious sentiment.

## **CONWAY HALL: AN APPEAL FOR ENDOWMENT**

**T**HE South Place Ethical Society is historically descended from a religious group formed in 1793 by Elhanan Winchester, of Massachusetts, U.S.A. In 1823-4 this congregation built the South Place Chapel, well known as a home of progressive religious thought during the ministry of William Johnson Fox, and in more recent times of Dr. Moncure D. Conway. Under the leadership of these two men, and especially during Conway's ministry, the theological creed of the congregation gradually gave place to a modern outlook. But its old seriousness remained, expressing itself now in concern for moral and intellectual progress, and especially for liberty of thought and speech.

For many years past the function of minister has been discontinued, and the platform is usually occupied on Sunday mornings by one or other of the Society's appointed lecturers—C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit., John A. Hobson, M.A., and S. K. Ratcliffe. Other speakers, however, are often invited to address the Society.

The Sunday Morning Discourse, although the Society's chief public activity, is far from being its only one. There are the Study, Literary, and Play Reading Circles, and a large variety of social activities; while the South Place Sunday Concerts continue to delight lovers of Chamber Music as they have done now for more than a generation. The Conway Memorial Lecture, delivered annually in honour of the Society's most famous leader, should also be mentioned. In collaboration with the Rationalist Press Association a series of free Tuesday evening lectures is given during the autumn and winter.

With the erection of Conway Hall, the Society's present home, new and splendid opportunities for development have been opened. The building is convenient of access from all parts of the metropolis, and it is adjacent to what in a few years will become the academic quarter of London. To this centre will be attracted large numbers of those who are best fitted to appreciate the importance of that free inquiry in Religion and Ethics for which "South Place" stands.

The Society has provided about £40,000 for the purchase of the site and adjoining property and the erection of a building containing a large hall to seat 500, a small hall to seat about 100, a library, club room, and other accommodation. The Trustees now appeal for the provision of an Endowment Fund, so that the Committee may be freed from the necessity of securing lettings which in present circumstances are essential to maintain the Society's solvency. If this financial pressure were removed, further activities of many kinds could be undertaken.

**Contributions should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer of the Society,  
Mr. C. E. Lister, at the above address.**

**C. 1 T T . .**

*The Editor of the "Rationalist Annual" desires it to be understood that each contributor is alone responsible for the opinions he expresses, and that he in no way commits the R. P. A. or any of the other contributors to an endorsement of his views. The aim of the Editor is to provide a platform for all liberal thinkers in general agreement with Rationalism as defined in the Memorandum of the R. P. A.*

## THE CHURCHES AND THEIR FUNCTION

BY PROFESSOR H. J. LASKI

### I

**W**HAT is the message the Churches have to convey to their members in the present international crisis? The Archbishop of York has told us that the application of sanctions by the League against Italy may be supported by Churchmen. The Council of the Free Churches has spoken in a similar vein. So far as one can judge, we are to have a repetition of 1914. Just as Belgium and the sanctity of treaties made that a holy war, so Abyssinia and the sanctity of the Covenant are to make action against Italy a holy war also.

I yield to no one in abhorrence of Mussolini's action. But before we accept the simple view that the Churches are on the side of righteousness (which happens conveniently to coincide with the side of the Government) it is worth while to ask some elementary questions. The root of the Abyssinian trouble is dissatisfaction in the Italian Government with her economic position. What have the Churches done in the past to condemn the imperialism whose example Italy is following? What are they doing now to safeguard the use of sanctions against perversion to imperialist ends? It is not enough to support a holy war. It is important so to support it that it ends in a holy peace. I cannot find in any ecclesiastical pronouncement on these grave issues one word that suggests a realization of the complicated problem we confront. They select one strand in an intricate web, and make that the basis upon which their advice proceeds. They bring to the service of this end all the emotion which religion can induce. They recognize the horror of war. But a "League" war is, of course, a different war from any other. A religious man can lend his support to a "League" war without violating any of the principles of his faith.

Is this really adequate? Before we bless this war as a holy war because it is a "League" war, ought we not to inquire what a "League" war is for? To uphold, Church-



seriously be denied that this is the case. The promise of salvation in the next world has acted so as to persuade the people to acceptance of their lot in this. The Churches generally have been one of the essential weapons of the governing class for this end. The order they have exalted, the peace they have preached, have been the order and the peace the governing class required for the maintenance of their privileges. There is hardly a great religious movement which, in its ultimate effect, has not been a conservative force in society. It may have begun as a movement for reform ; but once it has consolidated itself—even more once it has acquired a propertied interest of its own—it has sought to deflect the interest of the poor away from the material problems they confront, and to teach them satisfaction with the existing order of things. The Wesleyans, the Salvation Army, in our own day the Buchmanites, are all striking instances of this. It is not improbable that the Wesleyan movement postponed political reform in this country for a generation. It is certain that the Orthodox Church in Russia was one of the main instruments of reaction possessed by the Czar. The evil influence of the Roman Catholic Church in Italy and Spain is too well known to need discussion. It would, indeed, be difficult to think of a great social reform in the last century and a half the winning of which has not been postponed through the Church. National education, divorce law reform, birth control—on all these matters the Church has been on the wrong side ; in all of them, also, its influence remains one of the most powerful weapons in the hands of reaction.

Religion, in a word, is "socially useful" in the sense that it keeps the working classes quiet. To the degree that they are free from its authority, to that degree also they are free rationally to consider the logic of their situation. It may, indeed, be argued that the power of religion over the masses is consciously assisted by the State. Aulard has shown for the French Revolution, what is true for Soviet Russia, that once the helping hand of the State is withdrawn the ability of the orthodox faiths to retain their influence is very much smaller than their past history would lead us to imagine. For most men and women the acceptance of a religious creed is a gesture of traditional respectability rather than an act of reason. And the element of compulsion remains large. In Great Britain, for example, we assume as a matter of course that every regiment and every battleship must have its chaplain ; though no evidence has ever been forthcoming that a salutary moral effect is the outcome of his presence. Every college in the older universities is in the same case ; though no one has ever suggested that the newer universities suffer from their non-religious character. And

it is a commonplace that only the aid of the State in England enables the Church and similar schools to remain at a level of decent competence ; even as it is, their inferiority to the non-religious Council schools is well known to every student of education in this country.

## II

The inference I draw from all this is the simple one that so far as social behaviour is concerned there is no reason to attribute to the Churches any special contribution making for righteousness which would have been absent without them. As organized bodies they have had a twofold influence. They have, broadly, strengthened whatever case Governments have sought fit to make, and they have acted, particularly, as an anæsthetic to those who have suffered in the struggle for economic existence. I have suggested that there is no special ethic by which they can judge the habits of power ; and that, insofar as they apply general moral principles to those habits, their special privileges make them the friend of privilege, so that they have developed an ingenious casuistry whereby to evade in action the consequences of the principles they professed.

I am not, of course, concerned to deny that men have been led to noble actions by their faith. My argument is that it is as individuals that they have been led to those actions, and that even when the Churches to which they have belonged have got the credit for them the attribution is a mistaken one. Ignatius Loyola was not an extraordinary man because he was a Jesuit ; he became a Jesuit because he was an extraordinary man. The talents of men like St. Francis, Wesley, and General Booth used the medium of religious faith through which to express themselves. They were necessarily related to the mental climate of their time. But none of them proved that the Church as an institution is essential to the well-being of society. None of them was able so to transform his Church as to make it a critic of social standards in terms of a coherent body of ethical principles consistently applied with a view to the moral improvement of civilization. If we take the nineteenth century only, I should argue that non-religious bodies like the trade unions have done far more for the happiness of mankind than all the Churches taken together. If we take our own day, I should argue that the little group of revolutionaries who planned the Russian Revolution of 1917 have done more for human emancipation than it ever occurred to Churchmen to attempt once they had been adopted by the Roman Empire as the semi-official assistants of its authority.

I began by noting that, in the special international crisis

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which we confront, the Churches, as Churches, have nothing of any distinctive significance to contribute. A Rationalist cannot help noticing the difference between the effort for peace of a lay Christian like Mr. George Lansbury and so eminent a Christian official as the Archbishop of Canterbury. Churches, as Churches, are in fact unwilling to risk their authority by running counter to the policy of the State. They will express pious wishes for the victory of justice ; but they are careful not to take up a position which may endanger their prestige with those in power. The only exceptions to this rule apply either to individuals or to occasions like the Kulturkampf when the privileges they enjoy as Churches are in jeopardy. The Church of England has never found the methods of imperialism in Kenya incompatible with Christianity. The French clergy have never deemed it necessary, as a corporate body, to investigate the methods of imperialism in Indo-China. American clergy in the South have never united to denounce the treatment of the Negro. The Pope has made no pronouncement upon the methods whereby Signor Mussolini has maintained himself in power ; he has been more interested in the benefits accruing to the Roman Church from the concordat than in the moral compatibility of the Fascist adventure with Christian ethics. Henry IV was driven to Canossa by an eleventh-century Pope ; it does not appear that the successor of Hildebrand dare use the weapon of excommunication against the successor of Henry IV for offences against humanity far more grave.

Rationalists, when they examine a record of this character, can hardly help concluding that the Churches are simply vested interests, like other vested interests, whose power in the State is a function of their property and of the fact that they give a general and valued support to the existing social order. Historically their case does not now rest upon intellectual grounds ; the conquests of scientific analysis have eroded any claims they might once have made upon the minds of men. That is why so many of their defenders shift the ground of their defence from history, which is a matter of objective evidence, to experience, which is valid only for the individual to whom it has come. The Churches live on because they are invaluable to a property-owning class whose privileges they assist in maintaining. They becloud the atmosphere which might otherwise reveal the irrationality of those privileges. They help to obscure the nature of the essential battle in which mankind is engaged. When, at long last, the common man has ended the rule of privilege he will find that in its defeat the fate of the Churches is necessarily involved.

# AT THE "GEORGE AND DRAGON"

## A DISCUSSION CONCERNING THE DARWIN-BUTLER QUARREL

By SIR ARTHUR KEITH

**A**N account of the discussion reproduced in the following pages is, I think, worthy of publication for several reasons. The first reason is because of the eminence of my opponent. He has risen rapidly to a very high place among modern Men of Letters. The second reason is that he, like so many of the rising generation of literary Englishmen, holds two very erroneous opinions concerning Samuel Butler, the author of *Erewhon*. He believes, as do so many of his friends, (1) that Butler was treated in an unjust and cowardly manner by Darwin; (2) that there was among Darwin's contemporaries a conspiracy for the suppression of Butler's theory of Evolution, and that in this matter modern scientific men are no better than were the contemporaries of Darwin. I took such opportunities as the discussion presented to remove these wrong impressions, with, I fear, but an imperfect result.

A further reason for placing this discussion on record is the fact that the centenary of Butler's birth falls on December 5 of the closing year (1935), when biologists may expect to have flung in their faces the epithets and accusations which Butler levelled at the aged head of Charles Darwin, for it must be remembered that Butler was Darwin's junior by twenty-six years. It is well that Men of Letters should know what Men of Science think of Butler's case.

One further explanatory note is necessary. The discussion narrated here took place in the hot spell of last summer in the village of Downe, Kent. Near the village, separated only by the length of a meadow, is Down House, in which Darwin lived for forty years, and where he died on April 19, 1882. Darwin's old home, as readers already know, has been endowed and preserved by the munificence of Sir Buckston Browne.

I regret that it has not been found possible to reproduce the details of our discussion according to the notes which I originally made. They were found to be too prolix and too

personal, so I have curtailed my account, taking the opportunity at the same time of verifying some of the references made, both by my opponent as well as by myself. I especially regret having to omit almost the whole of an interlude in our discussion. This was made by a lady—a fellow guest at the "George and Dragon"—who intervened when the tempers of the disputants were becoming somewhat frayed. The lady, as readers will find in its proper place, was an ardent Butlerite, and derisively critical of science and of its apostles. Even with this omission and many others, my account far exceeds the space which an indulgent and liberal-minded editor had allotted to me.

"No! no!" exclaimed the Man of Letters; "say what you will, that quarrel is an ugly blot on the character of Charles Darwin."

"A quarrel?," I snorted.....Just then, by good fortune, a waitress placed cooling drinks in front of us, for it was a broiling afternoon in July. We were seated at a table under a bower of roses in the garden of the "George and Dragon," in the Kentish village of Downe.

The Man of Letters and I, when this altercation occurred in the garden of the inn, had just returned from a brief visit to Down House, the home in which Darwin reared his brilliant sons and composed his fateful books. My friend's success with the rising generation seemed to have gone to his head. He had been positively rude when we surveyed the "old study" in which *The Origin of Species* was written. "Just to think," said he then, "that the event foretold by Samuel Butler in 1880 has already come to pass. Butler asserted that the admiration felt by the Victorians for *The Origin of Species* will appear *unaccountable to our descendants fifty or eighty years hence.*"<sup>1</sup>

"And was it not," I broke in, "the same pen which wrote the following verdict two years before and repeated it two years later: *But to the end of time, if the question be asked, who taught people to believe in Evolution?.....there can only be one answer.....that it was Mr. Darwin.*"<sup>2</sup>

We exchanged scarcely a word after we left Down House and set out by the field path for the village. The storm broke as we proceeded to slake our thirst in the garden of the inn.

<sup>1</sup> I have been at pains to verify statements made by the Man of Letters in the biography and writings of Samuel Butler, author of *Erewhon*. For the above see *Unconscious Memory* (new ed.; 1910; p. 3).

<sup>2</sup> *Life and Habit* (new ed.; 1910; p. 277). Samuel Butler, by H. Festing Jones (Vol. I, p. 370).

"A quarrel?," I queried. "If a young man who has professed to be my friend and admirer brawls outside my street door and challenges me to come out and fight, and I go on quietly with my work, you can hardly make me a party to the quarrel; can you?"

"That depends," replied the Man of Letters, "on what happened before. If you had been grossly false to your friend, if you had lied to him and then refused him either explanation or redress—and that is how Charles Darwin treated Samuel Butler—then I should hold you not only a party to the quarrel, but regard you as actually the aggressor."

"Charles Darwin lie!" I exclaimed incredulously. "Unscrupulous critics said many hard things about Darwin, but Samuel Butler was the only man who deliberately charged him with falsehood, and, as you no doubt know already, Butler laboured under a misapprehension when he made the charge."<sup>1</sup>

"You Darwinians are remarkably thin-skinned," rejoined the Man of Letters. "You cannot abide any criticism of your master. The truer it is, the more you squirm. I notice that in the booklet<sup>2</sup> which you wrote recently you speak of Darwin as if his life on earth had been that of a saint—free from all the weaknesses to which ordinary humanity so often gives way. Let me recall to you the guise in which he appeared to his young friend Samuel Butler in the year 1879. Darwin had then reached his seventieth year, Butler his forty-third. The younger man had been an admirer and student of the elder for many years. They were bound together by many common ties. Butler had visited Downe, and Darwin had commended his writings and expressed interest in his welfare. Both were closely connected with the same town and school—Shrewsbury. Old Samuel Butler, our Samuel's grandfather, had been head of Shrewsbury school when Charles Darwin was a pupil. Canon Butler, of Langar, Notts, Samuel's father, was Charles Darwin's school-mate."

"Yes," said I, "they were even united by their dislikes: neither had a good word for the 'head'; the elder man condemned 'Old Butler,' and the younger 'Old Kennedy.'"

"Is it not strange," continued the Man of Letters, "that men of genius—for Butler was as fully endowed with genius

<sup>1</sup> For the elucidation of this misapprehension see *Samuel Butler*, by H. Festing Jones (Vol. I, p. 322); also *Charles Darwin and Samuel Butler: A Step Towards a Reconciliation*, by Sir Francis Darwin and H. Festing Jones (Fifield; 1911). The word "lie" is justified. Writing to Huxley, Darwin's words are: "The affair has annoyed and pained me to a silly extent; but it would be disagreeable to anyone to be publicly called in fact a liar." This letter is quoted in Festing Jones's *Samuel Butler* (Vol. II, p. 454).

<sup>2</sup> *Darwinism and its Critics* (Watts; 1935).

as was Darwin—are always given the wrong schoolmaster? The points, however, which I want to make clear to you—in order to bring out the peculiar nature of Darwin's lapse—are those which formed a bond between the two men. Both went to Cambridge University; both were intended for the Church; both suffered the misfortune of having their faith undermined—Darwin's by the study of Nature, Butler's by the study of the Bible. A loss of faith sent Darwin voyaging on the H.M.S. *Beagle*, and Butler to sheep-farming in New Zealand."

"Is it not a remarkable thing," I interposed, "that in spite of a complete loss of faith—a loss so complete that all which is miraculous or divine in the Christian doctrine was rejected by both men—they should have continued to claim membership of the Church of England?"<sup>1</sup>

"Both were Agnostics who never attended the church in which they claimed membership. I may mention another bond they had in common," I continued. "Neither earned a living; both depended on their fathers for their incomes. They differed, however, in one respect: Charles Darwin loved his father, Samuel Butler hated his—or at least said he did."

"A church must be pretty wide to be able to provide accommodation for two such Agnostics," I continued.

"Darwin's influence on Butler was profound," rejoined the Man of Letters. "You may be right in calling Darwin an Agnostic. So far as I can remember, he did not deny the existence of a God; he sought for one in Nature, and failed to find one. You are certainly wrong in speaking of Butler as an Agnostic; he sought for God in Nature, and found him. 'God is Life,' he discovered; and also he convinced himself that 'Life is God.'"<sup>2</sup>

"I do not think Butler ever worshipped such a God or prayed to him," I replied. "But," continued I, "how does our discussion bear on the attack which Butler made on Darwin?"

"Let us pass on to the year 1879," said my friend. "In that year Samuel Butler published a book; he named it *Evolution Old and New*. Even if this book did contain unfriendly criticisms of Darwin, no fair-minded person could justify the neglect and contempt with which Darwin received it, especially when we remember the friendly relationship which had existed between the two men"——

"Why should Butler attack Darwin?," I asked.

<sup>1</sup> See *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin* (Vol. III, p. 178); *Erewhon Revisited* (Traveller's Library; p. 10).

<sup>2</sup> *Luck or Cunning?* (pp. 146, 147).

"*Evolution Old and New* was a very direct attack, and one, as far as I can see, entirely unprovoked."

"You understand as well as anyone," exclaimed the Man of Letters, "the position in which Butler had suddenly found himself. He had lost faith in Darwin's theory of Evolution. Nay, he had convinced himself that Charles Darwin was an impostor, and had adorned himself with laurels which rightfully belonged to Buffon, Erasmus Darwin, and Lamarck. In *Evolution Old and New* Butler stripped these laurels from Darwin's brow and handed them back to their rightful owners; going out of his way, as he did so, to pay a high meed of praise to Charles Darwin's grandfather, Erasmus Darwin."

"I do not think Charles Darwin ever uttered a word in public, either of praise or condemnation, about this book of Butler's," I said.

"No; it is not what Darwin said, but what he did that matters," rejoined the Man of Letters. "He did not reply himself; he sent to Germany for a defence. In February, 1879, a certain Dr. Ernst Krause had published an article on Erasmus Darwin in a journal named *Kosmos*. Dr. Krause spoke highly of Erasmus Darwin, but maintained that, great as he was, he stood to Evolution as but a morning star, whereas his grandson was its noontide sun."

"Meantime," continued the Man of Letters, "in May, 1879, when Butler's book appeared, Charles Darwin resolved to have Krause's article translated—with, of course, Krause's consent. Darwin sent the German Professor a copy of *Evolution Old and New*, with the intimation that its author was scarcely worthy of *much expenditure of powder and shot*.<sup>1</sup> Don't you think Darwin might have told Butler of this? It would have been but friendly. Anyhow Krause, in preparing an expansion of his original article for translation, helped himself liberally from Butler's book—not a very honest thing to do, was it? Krause's last sentence was clearly aimed at Butler, but no name was mentioned. As this anti-Butler sentence becomes of the highest importance in the vindication of Butler's case, I shall try to recall it as near as my memory serves. It ran somewhat as follows: *The wish to revive Erasmus Darwin's system at the present day, as has been seriously attempted, shows a weakness of thought and a mental anachronism which no one can envy*."<sup>2</sup>

"Well," said I, "that is not a very deadly accusation. Krause made it. How can Charles Darwin be held responsible for it? Besides, it was true then, and still is."

<sup>1</sup> *Samuel Butler*, by H. Festing Jones (Vol. I, p. 326).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* (Vol. II, p. 447).



"Wait a moment," continued the Man of Letters; "I am just coming to Darwin's blundering duplicity. Krause's expanded article was duly translated, and Darwin wrote a Preface. The translated book appeared in November, 1879, under the title *Erasmus Darwin*, by Ernst Krause, with a preliminary notice by Charles Darwin. Naturally Butler was interested in this new book; he eagerly turned over its pages to see how far it was a reply to his *Evolution Old and New*, which had appeared five months before. The book puzzled him. He was assured in Darwin's Preface that Krause's text was that which appeared in *Kosmos*. He found passages which were not in the original text, especially the one just quoted. Here was an underhand piece of work! Darwin wished English readers to believe that Dr. Krause had condemned *Evolution Old and New* before that book was even written. Small wonder that Butler should see red. He wrote to Darwin; the letter was hot and urgent.

"You remember Darwin's halting reply," continued the Man of Letters, "Darwin expressing regret that he had not mentioned in his Preface that Dr. Krause had expanded his original article. He merely promised that, if a new edition of *Erasmus Darwin* was called for, mention would be made of the alteration. No explanation! no apology!

"Darwin's behaviour," continued the Man of Letters, "cannot be justified. Butler felt he had been cheated, and then trampled on. Is it any wonder that his wrath overflowed into the pages of the *Athenæum*? We now know that Darwin, having read Butler's indictment in the *Athenæum* and being greatly disturbed by it, ran to Huxley, asking 'What shall I do?' Huxley's advice was 'Do nothing!' Then in the following year (1880) Butler wrote another book—*Unconscious Memory*. In this too he poured out his wrath; he felt compelled to make Darwin a target for his wit, irony, and polished abuse. Again Darwin ran for advice—this time to Sir Leslie Stephen. Again he asked: 'What shall I do?' The great Agnostic said: 'Do nothing!'

"And so," complained the Man of Letters, "the policy of silence went on long after Darwin's death. Beyond a doubt Butler's life was embittered until his dying day (1902). He was inflamed by the galling sense of the injustice done him. This moved him to call Darwin the Pecksniff of Science.<sup>1</sup> It is all very well to say that Butler laboured then under a misconception. This was not cleared up until Sir Francis Darwin and Mr. Festing Jones took the matter

<sup>1</sup> *Samuel Butler*, Vol. II, p. 75.

up in 1910! Darwin had been in his grave twenty-eight years then, and Butler's ashes had been scattered to the winds of heaven eight years before. Cleared up! What consolation was there to Samuel Butler in that?"

At that moment I was relieved to see the waitress of the "George and Dragon" crossing the garden, carrying a laden tea-tray, which she placed in front of us. We fell to. We were both nettled, and I at least was more than a little bored. I could not help noting, however, the sweet tooth of my enemy—the Man of Letters; he was soon engaged on cakes, leaving his tea to cool while I did the opposite.

"You have been viewing Darwin's behaviour," I began, "as seen through the window of Butler's sitting-room in Clifford's Inn. Let us now look how it appeared through the window of Darwin's study. On February 12, 1879, Darwin reached his seventieth birthday; all the world was celebrating it, especially the scientific men of Germany. They filled the February number of *Kosmos* with tributes to Darwin. Among these was Dr. Krause's account of Erasmus Darwin. This article was welcomed at Down House for several reasons. Charles Darwin had discovered papers which threw a new light on his grandfather Erasmus. They served to remove certain misconceptions which had been given currency in Miss Seward's biography of him. Darwin wrote to Dr. Krause asking permission to have a translation made of his article in *Kosmos*. He agreed, and forthwith proceeded to expand his original article. Darwin used the newly-discovered papers when writing his Preliminary Notice for Dr. Krause's *Erasmus Darwin*. Meantime (May, 1879) Butler's *Evolution Old and New* was published, Erasmus Darwin being given a central position in its pages."

In Darwin's original Preface to Krause's book there occurred a paragraph which I will now cite:—

*Dr. Krause has taken great pains, and has added largely to his essay as it appeared in "Kosmos"; and my preliminary notice, having been written before I had seen the addition, unfortunately contains much repetition of what Dr. Krause has said.*<sup>1</sup>

"Thus," I continued, "the book for which Darwin wrote his Preface was found to contain two accounts of Erasmus Darwin—Krause's account of him, founded on Miss Seward's biography, and Darwin's own account, based on original family documents. Dr. Krause, at Darwin's suggestion, agreed to drop all biographical details from his part of the book. The greater part of the paragraph just cited then

<sup>1</sup> *Samuel Butler* (Vol. II, p. 45).

became unnecessary, and in correcting the printed proof Darwin deleted the whole paragraph, failing to note how essential the first sentence of the paragraph really was. A fatal oversight, I admit."

"I do not doubt," said the Man of Letters, "the facts are as you have stated them. What seems incredulous to me is this : Butler sent his letter to Darwin, urgently asking for an explanation, on January 2, 1880. Less than six months had elapsed since Darwin had corrected the proof of the Preface and deleted the redundant paragraph. How could Darwin in this short space of time have forgotten so completely what he had done?"

The Man of Letters still rejoices in his youth, while I am near enough to seventy to know the effects of time on memory. "Yes, my friend," I went on, "when you come to be almost seventy-one, as Darwin was when Butler's unmannerly letter reached him, you will more readily make allowance for Darwin. All through 1879 Darwin was closely occupied in completing *The Power of Movements in Plants*, a book containing results of a research which had occupied all his mental energy for some years. He had also to write a Preface for Weismann's *Studies in the Theory of Descent*. He was overwhelmed by correspondence ; his sleep was broken. Moreover, he was in bad health."

The Man of Letters continued to look incredulous, but remained silent. He now said : "What you have told me does not explain Darwin's evasive answer to Butler's letter. There must be something else to account for Darwin's behaviour."

"Yes," I admitted, "there was perhaps another circumstance that helped to choke Darwin's memory. He was not only old, in bad health, and overworked ; he was human. He was accustomed to abuse in the public press ; but this was the first time his personal honesty had been impugned. Impugned, too, by the son of his old schoolmate and grandson of his old schoolmaster. Butler's letter cut him to the quick ; it made him feel like a criminal in the dock, with Butler in the role of counsel for the prosecution. You remember how the letter ended : *I have a personal interest in this matter, and venture, therefore, to ask for the explanation which I do not doubt you will readily give me.*<sup>1</sup>

"Now, suppose," I continued, "that Butler, instead, had written a brief and friendly note, somewhat in this style :—

Dear Darwin,

Did you know that Dr. Krause's book is not the article he published in *Kosmos*? He evidently led you to

<sup>1</sup> *Samuel Butler* (Vol. II, p. 447).

believe it was, but as a matter of fact it is a very different one. The rascal has a sly dig at my *Evolution Old and New*, which readers will think strange, seeing that his text was written three months before my book was published. I should give the fellow a good drubbing if I were you.

With all good wishes  
from your former admirer,  
Samuel Butler.

"Butler could have trusted Darwin's sense of humour; his humour, if less mordant than Butler's, was quite as keen. Such a letter," I insisted, "would have sent Darwin hunting among his papers in a friendly spirit. He would have found the forgotten proof with the ill-starred deleted paragraph. We may be sure he would straight away have posted that proof to Butler, with abject apologies for his mistake and a promise of an immediate public explanation of it."

"You forget," broke in the Man of Letters, "that Butler was also human, very human. He was almost morbidly sensitive, and also deadly in earnest. To be dealt with as he was, first deceived and then treated with contempt, was more than any kind of flesh and blood could stand. Nor is there any excuse for Darwin withholding an explanation when he had discovered his mistake. It was abject cowardice which made him seek for shelter, first behind Huxley, and then behind Leslie Stephen. Huxley was the villain of the piece, with Stephen in the role of second murderer. It is astonishing to me that anybody should ever have regarded Huxley....."

"Have a cigarette," said I, as I pushed my case in front of the Man of Letters, and so interrupted a discourse which threatened to take a dangerous turn.

It was at this point that the Lady broke in upon us. She claimed to have known Butler when he was a habitu  of the Reading Room of the British Museum; from which readers will infer that she was no longer young. She was hatless and tailor clad. Her hair was grey and cut short, save for a heavy fringe cut straight across an ample forehead. She sat at a neighbouring table pretending to read a book. Her sketch block lay at her elbow.

I regret that, for reasons of space, her part in this discussion has to be omitted. Suffice it to say that we were warned "not to lose our tempers if we expected to find the truth"; that "our discussion was in vain; only women had the key to Butler's secret." He had, she declared, "a devouring

hunger, which was never satisfied. It was a hunger to be loved and admired by his fellow beings. He knew of only one form of immortality worth having—that which we find in the hearts and memories of those who love us....."<sup>1</sup> Darwin got all the attention ; Butler got all the kicks. If things had been otherwise there would have been no Butler-Darwin quarrel. Thus far a condensation of the Lady's line of argument.

The Man of Letters would also have left at this point, but I pressed him to stay, which he did, not unwillingly. We both felt that we had yet to reach the real bottom of the Butler-Darwin quarrel.

"Do you know," said he, "I do think, in spite of my partiality for Samuel Butler, that there is some truth in what our departed visitor said? Darwin's lapse in that Preface was only a mole-hill of a fault ; Butler's imagination distorted it until it became a mountain. His wrath remained unquenchable."

"And I am convinced you are right," I replied. "Darwin's sin was something much greater than the mere omission of a paragraph from a Preface. All unknowingly Darwin had committed one of the most deadly sins known to thinking humanity. He had turned his back on Butler's best beloved child. Butler suspected him of wishing to murder it."

"You must be speaking of a child of his mind," said the Man of Letters, "for as far as I can recall he had no issue of his body."

"I am speaking of *Life and Habit*, which he began in 1876. This book, as you know, was a continuation of an idea which seized Butler in 1863 while he was sheep-farming in New Zealand. He was then brooding over Darwin's recently-published *Origin of Species*. He again played with his fantastic idea of evolution in *Erewhon*—the idea of machines evolving until they became alive. He began by toying with a paradox ; he ended by the paradox toying with him.

"The key of the tragedy—for we are dealing with a tragedy—will be found in that long and self-revealing letter which Butler wrote to Francis Darwin in September, 1877.<sup>2</sup> This letter gives us the mood in which Butler revised his first draft of *Life and Habit*. He was glowing with mental

<sup>1</sup> The Lady had evidently read Butler's "How to Make the Best of Life" in *Essays on Life and Art* (1904, p. 69).

<sup>2</sup> *Samuel Butler* (Vol. I, p. 257)

excitement; he was convinced that he had worked his way much deeper into the secrets of Nature than had been done by anyone before. Darwin and he must now change places in the fair field of fame. Darwin would no longer be the teacher and he the taught.

"In the letter just mentioned," I continued, "Butler confided to Francis Darwin that *Life and Habit* 'has resolved itself into a downright attack upon your father's view of evolution, and a defence of what I conceive to be Lamarck's. I neither intended nor wished this, but was simply driven into it.'"

When *Life and Habit* appeared at the beginning of 1878 it caused no stir; Darwin remained silent; scientific men stood aloof.

"Was not Butler treated as an interloper by Darwin and his followers?" asked the Man of Letters.

"Not more than was Herbert Spencer, George Henry Lewes, or Grant Allen," I replied. "Darwin himself was an 'amateur.' All that Darwin ever said about *Life and Habit* was that he 'could not make its views harmonize with what I knew.'<sup>1</sup> Instead of being brought to his knees by the publication of *Life and Habit*, Darwin walked on as if nothing had happened."

At this the Man of Letters made an impatient gesture. "Darwin's conduct, to say the least, was unfriendly. Why did he not invite Butler to Downe and explain to him wherein *Life and Habit* was wrong?"

"Suppose," said I, "that Butler had sent you some of his later works—*The Authoress of the Odyssey*, for example, or *Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered*. After you had found—as most Men of Letters have found—that they were examples of misguided genius, what would you have done? Gone to him and pointed out the errors he had made? Or would you have acknowledged his gift by telling him you had found his book of absorbing interest, and hoped to devote more time to it later on. In either case you would have made an enemy of Butler. No human effort is so futile as that which is intended to convince a man of the error of his ways."

"Well, that is what I suppose Darwin felt about *Life and Habit*. To reply to Butler would have entailed the writing of a library of books."

"Do you mean to say," broke in the Man of Letters, "that the very original and brilliant theory of Evolution formulated by Butler in *Life and Habit* was not, and is not, worthy of consideration by men of science? He undid

<sup>1</sup> *Samuel Butler* (Vol. II, p. 452).

Darwin's greatest blunder. Darwin's theory dismissed Mind from the universe, Butler's brought it back again. And it is still back, as you may learn from the latest pronouncement of Sir James Jeans. In the opinion of Sir James the universe gives clear evidence of being the work of a mind possessed of the highest mathematical genius. It looks to me as if Butler is coming into his kingdom in spite of all that Darwinians say to the contrary."

I thought it wise to ease our discussion by pulling aside for a moment from the main issue. I recalled the brief note wherein Dr. Robert Bridges acknowledged Butler's work on *The Sonnets*. "I am very sorry indeed," said the poet, "you have been so clever.....Still, you must remember that you proved Darwin to be an arch-impostor, and there was no fault in your logic."<sup>1</sup>

"There is no fault in the logic of *Life and Habit*," I agreed; "the fault lies in its premises."

"I know nothing about the premises," observed the Man of Letters. "All I do know is that the idea which forms the basis of *Life and Habit* is one of the most complete and most brilliant known to me."

"Butler's ideas may be brilliant," I rejoined; "nevertheless they are ill-founded assumptions. He assumed that living matter of every form—whether it has taken on the shape of a cabbage leaf or of a piece of brain cortex—is endowed with intelligence and memory; realizes its needs, and knows how to satisfy them. Living things, Butler held, change and evolve to satisfy their needs. He made another assumption—also a brilliant one. He assumed that heredity is a form of memory. Through memory the experience of one generation is passed in the fertilized egg to the next generation. You are quite right: Butler's scheme of Evolution is the most complete ever formulated. If you accept it, then all follows, as Butler postulated."

"Then why do you not accept it?," demanded the Man of Letters. "Is Butler still boycotted by men of science?"

"Far from it," I answered. "It is because Butler has no help to give to men who are seeking, like myself, to explain the facts of Evolution and of Life. His contemporaries realized, just as we do now, that to accept Butler's theory of Evolution is just to return to the Slough of Despond from which Darwin succeeded in extricating us. For in truth Butler's theory is none other than a new and improved version of that formulated in the earlier chapters of Genesis. Butler changed the Biblical theory in two respects.

<sup>1</sup> *Samuel Butler* (Vol. II, p. 319).

Creator is given a different spelling ; it is "MIND" in place of "GOD." The second and very important change is that the creative (or evolutionary) agency no longer stands outside the tree of life as in Genesis, but is diffused throughout the sap and substance of every particle of the tree of life."

"I cannot see," insisted the Man of Letters, "that Butler's theory is any the worse for being more Biblical than Darwin's. Is not the Tree of Life postulated by Butler instinct with intelligence throughout? And is not the only government in Darwin's tree that of Chance—another name for Chaos?"

"How can you so libel Darwin's theory of Evolution?," I demanded. "The grossest wrong ever committed by Butler was when, speaking of Darwin, he said that it was '*strange that such a master of cunning (in the sense of my title) should have been the apostle of luck.*'"<sup>1</sup> How often does Darwin, in his *Origin of Species*, reject with scorn the idea that the progress of evolutionary change depends on chance? He confessed, it is true, that he was ignorant of the causes of variation, but was certain that those who pursued the paths of science would discover their mode of origin. That is what we are now doing."

The Man of Letters was plainly bored, and perhaps somewhat puzzled by what I had said. "I cannot make out where the truth is," he replied. "Here are we, who are students of the literature of England, giving Butler an ever higher place in the hierarchy of our great writers. And here are Englishmen of science—if I am to take your word for it—refusing to give him a place at all in the history of English science. It seems strange that a man can be a genius in literature and a 'duffer' in science."

"Butler is an excellent proof of such a possibility," I replied. "In literature it is the brilliance of an idea, not the proof of its truth, which matters. In science brilliance is of little account ; proof is everything."

"Is there, then, no truth," asked the Man of Letters, "in Butler's contention that he was boycotted and neglected by Darwin and other men of science?"

"Let me try to explain," I went on. "Butler was born on December 5, 1835. No doubt literary men will make his centenary an occasion for repeating the accusations brought by him against Darwin and Darwin's followers. I was one of those who wilfully neglected him. When Butler was living in Clifford's Inn and working in the Reading Room of the British Museum I had rooms in a neighbouring Inn—the New Inn—and was teaching medical

<sup>1</sup> *Luck or Cunning* (1887 ; p. 291).



students at the London Hospital. I was also collecting evidence bearing on the evolution of man. I got no help from Butler. Nor did my pupils. To tell my students that man came by his big brain just because his ancestors felt the need of a big brain would have been received with a smile. Yet that was the explanation which Butler offered us to account for the presence of a big brain in man. There were more promising lines of approach to the solution of such problems. We were then (in the 'nineties' of last century) beginning to discover that some of the secrets of heredity were to be found in a microscopic study of the germinal cells. Butler's assumption that heredity was a form of memory was useless as a working hypothesis; it led us nowhere. With Darwin's theory it was different; its adoption led at once, and still does, to an enormous increase of knowledge. Butler's theory has proved to be barren; it belongs to the world of romance, not of actuality."

At this point the Man of Letters yawned, looked at his watch, and suddenly rose from his seat. "How am I to get out of this wretched place——?"

# IN DEFENCE OF MATERIALISM

By J. B. S. HALDANE, F.R.S.

**N**O, no, Mr. Lloyd George. It may be that too much of the blame for our present distresses is laid upon you as joint author of the Treaty of Versailles ; but you will hardly save yourself by attributing, as you have recently done, the present danger of war to the fact that the world is plunged in a slough (or perhaps a welter) of materialism. Mr. Hoover tried the same excuse a few months before his fall from office. And it is worth noting that both Mussolini and Hitler are opponents of materialism, while Haile Sellasie would be if any materialists were to be found in Ethiopia. It is fair to attribute to materialism some of the conditions, both bad and good, which prevail in Russia. For Russia is ruled by materialists. Other countries are not. I sometimes wish they were. For materialism is a more humane doctrine than that which, rarely expressed in words but often in action, appears to animate many of our financial leaders—enough of them to set the pace. This is the simple creed that money is the measure of all things ; a creed which may be called economicism. It is perhaps—though I doubt it—a perverted form of materialism, as devil-worship is a perverted form of religion.

But what is materialism itself ? I think we may define it as the belief that all happenings can be explained in terms of material happenings. In the particular case most interesting to ourselves we may use Lenin's words : " For every materialist the laws of thought that reflect the forms of the real existence of things are totally like, and in no way different from, those forms." Lenin did not go as far as Dr. Watson and deny the existence of thought ; but he regarded it as the mere reflection of matter. Whatever metaphor he may use, a materialist thinks that matter determines mind, and not the converse.

What effect should a belief in materialism have on our conduct ? Let us first deal with St. Paul's absurd statement, that the proper programme for a materialist is " Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." This remark is on an intellectual level with his views on the wearing of hats in church. On an intellectual, but not a moral, level. For while the

saint's theory as to the susceptibility of angels to the allurements of mortal ladies has sanctified the charming art of the milliner, his opinions on the connection between digestion and dying have been responsible for a great deal of bad counsel and probably a fair amount of bad conduct. I have heard rather few sermons since I left school, but I can remember at least two which were public exhortations to immorality. The reverend gentlemen informed their hearers that if they once lost their faith in certain theological doctrines there was no very particular reason why they should not make beasts of themselves. I do not know how many of the congregation acted on this sage advice; but to judge from the conduct of some of my acquaintances I suspect that they may have found disciples.

In fact, materialism is perfectly neutral as between ethical ideals. It leads to conclusions as to the probable consequences of our actions, but not as to what consequences are desirable. A materialist may desire to enlarge his belly, his biceps, or his bank balance, or he may prefer to feed or teach his neighbours. His materialism gives him no reason whatever for preferring one form of satisfaction to another. It is true that a materialist, who tends to stick to hard facts, is particularly likely to realize that over-eating and over-drinking shorten life, and that it is very difficult to buy back one's health when one has lost it. But if he thinks that the life of a short-lived and dyspeptic millionaire is desirable there is nothing in materialism to disprove this curious opinion. Nor does materialism say him nay if he considers it desirable to shorten his life by fighting against disease or injustice.

At first sight this ethical neutrality is a point against materialism and in favour of religion. But this view will not bear too close an examination. Apart from ethical grounds, a Christian has no reason for being good except the fear of hell-fire. The wicked (or at least those who are wicked from the Christian standpoint) often enjoy themselves well enough in this life. It is pretty universally admitted that a good life based on a fear of hell is a poor kind of good life. Moreover, history shows that this doctrine leads to oppression and cruelty. For one cannot long continue to believe that one is bound for hell and preserve his sanity. But one can readily believe it of others; and it is an excellent excuse for interfering with them if one happens to be a power addict.

Now, of course the main reasons which have led Christians as such to lead a good life have been love of God, Jesus, or the Virgin Mary. But they are loved, not because they are believed to be powerful, but because they are believed to be

good. Unless you happen to prefer good to evil you have no motive for loving God. The physical attractions of the Christian heaven are meagre, and it would be intolerable for a person who did not love God to spend eternity in his presence. The Muslim heaven, it is true, offers damsels, drinks, and shady trees; but Mohammed stated definitely that the chief pleasure of the blessed is the presence of God. So the most that can really be said for religion as a motive to good conduct is that it offers sensual penalties and sometimes rewards, and that it focusses the love of the good on certain persons. For the materialist the rewards, the punishments, and the persons are alike imaginary. Apart from a reference to hell-fire the Christian, then, cannot really answer the question, "Why should I love good?" He can only say "For the love of God"; and when asked why one should love God his sole reply is, "Because God is good." The materialist, if he is sensible, does not try to answer the question. No hypothesis about the physiology of the brain will help him to do so. For after all it is a verbal question. If we appreciate what is meant by the word "good," it is at once obvious that we should love it and try to do it. If we do not appreciate it, the best way to do so is to study some authentic examples.

It does not follow that the ethical views of a materialist are likely to be the same as those of a religious man. They will probably be better in some respects and worse in others. To begin with, it is unfashionable and unprofitable to be an avowed materialist except in Russia. So if anyone outside Russia tells you that he is a materialist he is usually displaying a certain amount of moral courage. His acquaintances will look down on him, either ethically for holding a philosophy which they think is immoral, or intellectually because they believe it to be false. He will find it harder to get a job. The sales of his books will be lessened if he is a writer. In Russia the opposite is true. It requires courage in numerous situations to say that one is not a materialist, and I suspect that many a respectable materialist secretly keeps an ikon in his cupboard. The only Russians whose materialism proves their courage and sincerity are those men and women who stood out for it under the Tsar, such as most of the present rulers of the country.

But these are incidentals. Materialism, as such, may, I think, blunt a man to certain of the subtler values which are embodied in our traditional pre-scientific way of looking at things. Excellent examples of this may be found in such a book as Watson's *Behaviorism*. Dr. Watson refuses to admit that there is any criterion of the beauty of an object except the disturbances of the organs innervated by the

autonomic nervous system which it induces in those who contemplate it. And he further proceeds to give equal weight to each appreciator. Apart from the objection that such a criterion is unworkable because we cannot measure visceral reactions or even observe them with any accuracy, why count heads? This is a useful political device. It may also be economically important to realize that a picture of robins in the snow is likely to sell in larger numbers (though at a smaller price) than a reproduction of a Modigliani. But the beauty of an object is not the same as its economic value. And it seems to me not unreasonable, in a consideration of beauty, to accord more weight to the opinions of those who have devoted much time to its contemplation than to the views of the inexpert.

In the same way some materialists make very crude ethical judgments, but, unfortunately for the world, this is by no means a prerogative of materialists.

Curiously enough, the extremest examples of materialism in ethics are to be found among people who claim to be uncompromising opponents of materialism. Such is the belief, which was widely held at one time, that alcoholic beverages are responsible for a considerable fraction of human misconduct. In tracing such large moral results to one particular organic compound the ladies and gentlemen who were responsible for the eighteenth amendment in America and the various laws which restrict the drinking of the poor in England went far beyond the wildest extravagances of Bolshevik materialism.

Another excellent example of crude materialism among non-materialists is to be found in the treatment of corpses, particularly by Christians. It is partly based on language. We talk of burying Uncle Joe. Actually, if Christianity is correct, Uncle Joe at the time of "his" burial is in another place or another mode of being, while if materialism is true Uncle Joe, or all that was essential of him, simply does not exist any more. Yet we treat the corpse with a good deal more respect than we ever treated Uncle Joe during his life, and spend a good deal more money on him. It is no use pleading the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Uncle Joe's body will disintegrate in his grave just as surely as, but rather more slowly and a good deal more messily than, if it had been cremated or cut up for cat's meat. The resurrection of his body would present no more and no less difficulty to Omnipotence in the one case than in the other. Actually, of course, our treatment of dead bodies is partly due to the fact that we cannot make the effort needed to realize emotionally that a corpse is something utterly different from a living person; partly to vestiges of pre-Christian religions which

identified a man more completely with his body than we do to-day. Other motives are snobbery and the propaganda of undertakers and clergymen, who have an economic interest in funerals. If we are really sad at Uncle Joe's death it is, of course, psychologically sound to carry out a ritual of some kind. But why make so unpleasant an object as a corpse the centre of that ritual? Only because we are behaving as rather naive materialists.

The true materialist, as a matter of fact, is generally pretty indifferent as to how his or her corpse is dealt with. In Russia the bodies of Communists are usually cremated. That of Lenin was treated differently. The main bulk of it is in the tomb on Red Square, remarkably well preserved. Some of his internal organs are to be found in the Lenin museum. His brain was cut into sections and microscopically examined. It was of average size, but the Betz cells, whose function is to send impulses down the spinal cord, were unusually large. So were certain groups of "association cells," which are often particularly small in criminals of the impulsive type.

Lenin's outside presented an interesting problem. It had to be preserved not only from decay, but from autolysis, the softening process which takes place in meat when it is hung, and from such drying as occurs in mummies. It is said (in my opinion falsely) that Leninism is a new religion. If so I know its Joseph of Arimathea, Professor Sbarsky, who embalmed Lenin's body—a process which took three months. He will not divulge the method employed, which he says is art, not science. One detail is, however, clear. The corpse is preserved in an atmosphere nearly saturated with water vapour, so that there is no danger of its drying up like a mummy.

I do not think one can logically object to the preservation of Lenin's corpse. Whether or not future historians will approve of him, it is difficult to doubt that they will regard him as the greatest man of his age. And as many of his portraits are very misleading I, for one, was very glad to get a chance of seeing what he looked like. Certainly not very like one group of conventional portraits. His hair is not particularly dark, and his eyes have only a very moderate slant. As arranged by Sbarsky and Vorobiev his lips preserve a faint smile. It requires a certain effort to realize that he is dead. One would be inclined to say that he was a very tired man, on the whole satisfied with his work, but realizing that even the most enormous success does not quite fulfil all one's expectations—a man sleeping very soundly, but ready if necessary to wake up again.

It is probable that some of the millions who view Lenin's

body every year take this view. Others believe that it has been preserved by a miracle. The Government, I am told, distribute tracts pointing out that this is no miracle, but a triumph of science. To which, I take it, those peasants who combine a belief in miracles with approval of the Revolution answer the Russian for "Oh yeah." One story of a miracle is current, though probably no more reliable than most other stories about Moscow. A poor widow and her child, who was paralysed in both arms, went to Lenin's tomb one afternoon. The other members of the queue began to murmur when the boy did not take off his hat on entering the room where the body is displayed. Suddenly he lifted his arms and removed the hat. At midnight two G.P.U. policemen arrived at the widow's lodging, and presented her with two hundred roubles and two tickets for Semipalatinsk, near the frontier between Siberia and Mongolia. Miracles are not encouraged in Moscow. The legend does not relate whether the cure was permanent. Nor, for that matter, do most accounts of cures by saints.

So much for Lenin and Uncle Joe. What more positive claims can we make for materialism as a basis for ethics? Quite a lot, I think. The human race suffers from a curious failing. We are not satisfied with knowing that something is true or right. We must go on to construct a theory to justify ourselves. So far so good; but we get such satisfaction from our theories that we are delightfully uncritical of them. To explain any set of facts an infinite number of theories may be constructed. In science we choose a theory out of this infinity by two criteria. First it must be simple, and second it must enable us to predict otherwise unexpected facts. The latter is much the most important, because it enables one to disprove a theory. Very few scientific theories can be proved, because they mostly contain the word "all" when properly stated, and it is rarely possible to get hold of all the members of a class—for example, all rabbits or diamonds. But all false theories, if they are anything more than strings of words, can be disproved. The best that can be said for any theory is that a lot of attempts to disprove it have failed. Unfortunately most ethical theories, not being scientific, cannot be tested in this way.

The English—and it is one of their chief glories—combine a real respect for fact, both physical and ethical, with a profound distrust of theories. In "less happier lands" a moral action does not become respectable until it has been supported by a vast structure of theory. It is more important that this theory should be picturesque than that it should be true, or even self-consistent. Such theories tend

to cluster round the great religions, until their original core becomes unrecognizable. In England a continuous series of movements, ever since the time of Wycliffe, has been tending to simplify Christianity. They have gone so far that to-day a large proportion of Englishmen are left with an ethical system associated with very little religious theory.

Now the practical objection to religious theories is that they create a host of unnecessary duties. Christianity emphasized the great and simple duty of loving our neighbours, even when they are unpleasant. But it also laid down a host of other duties, such as attending mass, Sunday observance, honouring the clergy, prayer, and fasting, not to mention the avoidance of meats offered to idols, things strangled, and blood. It has been found practicable to love one's neighbour without performing these specifically religious duties. The only question is whether the performance of the latter duties helps us to carry out those which are concerned with this present world.

No one will deny that this is sometimes the case, but I think that at least as often piety becomes a substitute for charity and even for justice. Perhaps I am prejudiced by my surroundings, for I am writing this in Andalusia. Nowhere else in Europe have I seen more colossal treasures dedicated to religion, or more diseased children. I have, however, seen more of both in India. The coffin of St. Ferdinand in Seville cathedral is said to consist of half a ton of silver and a smaller quantity of gold. Many of the blind children are victims of *ophthalmia neonatorum*, a disease which can be prevented by washing the eyes of new-born babies with silver nitrate. A simple calculation shows that St. Ferdinand's coffin dissolved in nitric acid would suffice to protect the eyes of all Spanish children for about a century, assuming the present birth-rate. It would be an act of sacrilege to dissolve it. This is one of the facts which make me particularly tolerant of sacrilege, and prepared to accept a good deal more materialism in the decision of questions of right and wrong.

But all such criticism of other theories is beside the point if materialism is demonstrably false, as I, for one, used to believe. I do not even now believe that it is demonstrably true. That would be too much, I fear, to hope of any philosophy. But the recent progress of physics seems to remove the main rational objections that have been made to it. There remain, of course, the irrational objections, which probably carry a great deal more weight with most people.

Clearly, if matter consists of little particles whose position in space at any instant is exactly definable, every description



of the material world reduces itself to an account of the motions of these particles, and mind becomes an irrelevant and quite inexplicable addition to the material world—an epiphenomenon, as T. H. Huxley called it. But theory of the nature of matter is largely due to the philosopher Descartes, the man who invented graphs; and, although it has served physicists very well for over 250 years, it has been necessary to abandon it when describing the behaviour of very small bits of matter.

This does not mean that physicists have abandoned materialism. Only a minority has done so. It means that they are beginning to attribute to matter properties sufficiently complicated to make a materialistic account of life and mind very much more plausible than seemed likely a few years ago. In particular they can show, in mathematical language, how what for their predecessors was a mere group of atoms or electric charges exhibits a unity which seems to be of the same general type as the unity of the organs in a living creature or the sensations and thoughts in a mind. In order to do this they have not borrowed conceptions from biology or psychology. They have made their own ideas, which can be expressed in mathematical terminology. But the attempt to express them in words has not been so successful. The equations are the same as those for systems of waves; but as the waves in question cannot be observed, and are not in ordinary space, the analogy must not be pressed too far.

It may later on turn out that matter, the basic reality of which physicists give an account, will prove to be describable in terms of mind. But there is very little sign of this in present-day physics—definitely less, in my opinion, than when Russell wrote *The Analysis of Mind*. The tendency of science to-day is definitely towards materialism, though not towards the unduly mechanistic materialism of some nineteenth-century thinkers. In a world in which science is assuming a constantly increasing importance only harm can come from shutting our eyes to this fact, or assuming that materialism implies ethical consequences which are actually foreign to it.

It may not be the final form of philosophy, if such an expression has any meaning. But it is certainly neither so false nor so immoral as its opponents assert.

# A SONNET SEQUENCE

By EDEN PHILLPOTTS

## FORE-GLOW

**D**AY'S morning flower with petals crystal white  
Unfolded in the East, and then there spread  
A sudden radiant burning overhead  
To melt the fading vapours of the night,  
Where fore-glow stained with tender rose and red  
The risen day-spring's own immaculate light,  
For mercy of our feeble human sight  
By earth-born colour soothed and comforted.  
White-minded souls are rare, yet may you scan  
Sons of the morning very apt to show  
Their candid spirits dyed with love of man  
And tintured in humanity's fore-glow,  
Where still they hearten, fortify, and bless  
Upon the lonely road to righteousness.

## CLOUDS

Your realms and continents and mountains high  
In gloom and pomp of storm and sunlit gold ;  
Your argent shores and islets manifold  
On the blue ocean of the steadfast sky ;  
Your armies, navies under banners bold,  
At noon to conquer and at even fly ;  
Your counterfeits of our reality  
Betoken all to Mother Earth the old  
And self-same road that she is travelling by.  
Our planet home—this dear circumference  
Of human fatherlands and motherlands—  
From space and time shall also vanish hence,  
Fade, like a flower in a baby's hands,  
And on the tide-rip of eternity  
Founder to cosmic nothingness, as ye.

**HOST OF HEAVEN**

Shall it be deemed these myriad beacons bright  
But scatter an abyss of nothingness,  
Lacking one heart of conscious life to bless  
With their immensities of heat and light ;  
That the unnumbered galaxies hold less  
Than planet Earth in Alma Mater's sight,  
Her space-time æons but an empty night  
Save for the tiny pightel we possess ?  
Forbid it, Science ; feign ye not our home  
Creation's cynosure and peak and dome,  
Nor guess our star the sweetest grape that shines  
Upon the garth of Heaven's glimmering vines.  
Enlarge your cosmic sympathies a span,  
Conceding vaster manifests than man.

**SEA SUNSET**

Those cloudy galleons homing to the West  
Through amber magic of the sunset sleight,  
With pennons gay and golden bosoms bright,  
Shall never make their fairy haven's rest  
Ere ancient and inexorable night  
Each glory dims and robs from every crest  
Of falling wave its emerald delight,  
From after-glow her tender manifest.  
Systole—diastole—evermore  
Pulse dark and dawn about the middle time  
When colour dies and twilight voices chime  
On earth and air, by sea and patient shore :  
All stealthy, sweet, and unregarded things  
Grown dearer now than human happenings.

## EVENING STAR

Now throbs the evening star upon a sky  
Translucent, stainless, and so passing clear  
That earthly hearts may feel a pang of fear  
Before the marvel of such purity  
Lest any mundane breath should venture near  
And stain with tremor of a human sigh,  
Or all unwitting wet a lifted eye  
To blot immaculate heaven with a tear.  
Yet earthborn spirits wove this golden woof  
Of glory for the death bed of the day ;  
No call to dread, or kneel, or stand aloof :  
An evening star and crystal panoply  
Of sunset fading into twilight time  
Our souls alone exalt to the sublime.

## SKELETON

Why thrust within these tapered, delicate hands  
A crooked scythe and sandglass—symbols twain  
Of Death's own orb and sceptre, as we feign,  
Or hide this unlined brow in cere-cloth bands ?  
Life harboured here, mayhap without a stain ;  
Life's ivory ark and tabernacle stands  
For shield and keep, supporting earth's demands,  
Shafting sweet flesh and blood against her strain.  
As on a winter time the forest trees  
Reveal their noble nakedness awhile,  
Till spring shall hide those far-flung majesties  
Of soaring roof and many-pillared aisle,  
So in your dome and column, arch and span,  
Shines out the marble palace built for man.

**THE GREEKS**

Not pious hope, nor yet a learned dream  
Touching the genesis of Mother Earth ;  
No vague assumption of her planet birth,  
As heart and navel of the cosmic scheme,  
Can add one cubit to her scanty girth  
Or hail her little ladyship supreme  
In universal measure and esteem,  
For all her dignities and all her worth ;  
But did we raise our modest star to heaven,  
A sister for the mightiest orbs that roll,  
It were by virtue of the blessed leaven  
That Hellas kneaded into human soul,  
Ere the bright morn of Attic glory waned  
And for a golden moment Reason reigned.

**MY GENERATION**

Together in the twilight hour we stand,  
Nor fear the uncertain echo of our feet  
Along each darkening aisle and downward beat  
To old oblivion. We shall disband  
Unwearied, yet not discontent to greet  
Dismissal from the poignant faery land  
Of consciousness and conscience, and demand  
To justify and make our journey sweet.  
To-day we linger ; but to-morrow wend  
For mystic, indecipherable fold  
Without beginning and without an end,  
Where dead and yet unborn their tryst may hold.  
Youth laughs to see us fade forgotten down,  
Hope's stubborn fool's cap still on each grey crown.

# THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

BY ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

**B**Y Materialism I mean a theory which regards nature as prior to mind, and man as a product of nature governed by natural laws. I do not intend in the present article to argue in defence of this general position. It obviously demands treatment by itself, and I have dealt with it elsewhere.

Those who are Idealists or Vitalists—that is, who regard mind as independent of natural causation—will naturally regard religion and reason as independent facts in history; but if we are Materialists we must look for the origin of political and religious ideas and institutions in material causes. These may lie either in man's heredity or in his environment; but heredity is clearly no explanation. In spite of Gilbert we are not born Liberals or Conservatives, nor for that matter Socialists or Individualists. These are acquired characteristics, and their causes therefore lie in our environment. The part played by natural environment in moulding ideas and institutions is so obvious as to need no stressing. But it does not go very far. Natural environment changes very slowly, while ideas and institutions sometimes change very fast, as in England during the Reformation and the Great Rebellion, in France during the Revolution, and in Russia in our own life-time. The major causes, therefore, of such changes must be sought in man's social environment. In modern times this includes books and newspapers; but the production of these, like that of all other commodities, is governed by economic considerations, so that the Materialist conception of history involves in the last resort economic determinism. In the words of Engels, it "starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life, and next to production the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure."

Where a community lives in close contact with nature and with the very minimum of tool equipment, as in the case of primitive communities all the world over, its ideas and

institutions will be of the sort described by Sir James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*. The first form of class distinction among human beings seems to have been between priests and laity, priests being persons credited with some sort of magic power over the forces of nature. Even this elementary form of class distinction is obviously possible only when food production has progressed sufficiently to enable a community to support not only its working members but that ruling class which their labour maintains. It is possible, that is, only when there exists a *surplus product* above that necessary to keep the mass of the community in being. Hence the earliest civilizations arose in fertile river valleys like those of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and China.

The Materialist conception of history finds the recurrent *leitmotif* of human affairs in the struggle for this *surplus*—the struggle of its possessors to retain and increase it and of non-possessors to obtain it. This truth was recognized even by the early historian Thucydides. At the very beginning of his history he observes that “the fattest soils have always been the most subject to changes of inhabitants. The goodness of the land increasing the power of some particular men caused seditions, and made them more liable to the attack of strangers.” This is still true to-day. Modern wars are not undertaken except for territory that possesses oil or some other natural advantage. The struggle for the *surplus product* dominates history.

The second form of class differentiation rendered possible by the surplus product was slavery. As soon as it was generally recognized that human beings could produce more than their keep, it became common sense to make your enemy work for you instead of killing him. By the time written history begins slavery is already long established; indeed, without slaves to keep them the ancient historians would not have had leisure to write. It follows that our knowledge of ancient civilization reflects chiefly the point of view and ideas of the slave-owning class. The influence of their position as slave-owners on the ideas and institutions of the Greeks and Romans is obvious. Slavery made metaphysical speculation possible. It is only when a class of men like the slave-owners of ancient times or the leisured class to-day is free from the necessity of earning a living by struggling with material objects that the question whether matter exists is even thinkable. Slavery bred a contempt for industry of any sort; when Plato wishes to disparage a certain sort of philosopher he compares him to “a bald-headed little tinker.” Lastly, slavery bred imperialism. The wars of Rome during her greatest period of expansion were simply slave-hunting expeditions on a huge scale. The numbers sold into slavery

during the last two centuries B.C. ran into millions. Slaves cultivated the soil, worked in mines, and performed other mechanical offices; many trades and professions were filled by the scarcely less despised class of freedmen; and the minority of free citizens in the golden age of the Roman Empire amounted to less than a quarter of the population.<sup>1</sup>

According to historical Materialism, "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." Ancient history is full of struggles between patricians and plebeians among the free population and between masters and slaves. Armed slave revolts, however, were only intermittent, and were invariably in the end unsuccessful. The slaves were of too many different nationalities and languages to develop the organization necessary to a successful revolution. The result was that the Roman world was inhabited by a population three-fourths of whom were without freedom, without country, and without hope, while the object of the remaining fourth was to live securely and with a minimum of boredom on the labour of those three-fourths. It is necessary to grasp this if we are to understand the movement of ideas in the closing centuries of the ancient world, and in particular the religious revolution ending in the establishment of Christianity.

When a fundamental need is denied fulfilment in the world of reality it is apt, as we know, to seek fulfilment in the world of dreams. It is the same with communities as with individuals, except that for a depressed community the place of a wish-fulfilling dream is taken by a wish-fulfilling myth. We see this clearly in the history of the Jews. Ancient Palestine was a borderland where rival empires met; and in the clash between rival empires the Jews were always getting the worst of it. Their early religion, so far as it can be inferred from the much-edited records of the Old Testament, seems to have been like that of other primitive communities—a worship of nature-gods, who delivered the goods only if you followed the correct ritual. Unfortunately they did not deliver the goods. Hostile armies swept over the country and carried off the goods, and ended by carrying off the people too. Evidently there was something very wrong. Hence in the later literature of the Old Testament there is a note of frustration very different from the aristocratic serenity which marks the classics of Greece and Rome. The Jews were a conquered people, obliged to bow their backs to the burdens imposed by their various foreign conquerors as well as by their native priests. They looked forward to a day when the tables would be turned on their oppressors, and as

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica* (13th edition), article "Slavery."



that day receded further from the world of actuality their wish crystallized into the wish-fulfilling myth of the Messiah. Judaism was in fact a new mutation in religious evolution, the function of which was to render life tolerable to people who, owing to political and economic circumstances beyond their control, were beginning to find it intolerable. The ruling class among the Jews—the great priestly families—do not seem, judging from the records of Josephus, to have taken Judaism seriously; but the trading and peasant classes, from whom sprang the Pharisees and Zealots, went at it in grim earnest.

By some process of which we do not know the details this Messianic myth of the Jews coalesced with other ideas current among the subject races of the Roman Empire and took shape as Christianity. In dealing with the history of Christianity we are under the disadvantage of depending for the most part on writers whose chief interest is theological. Any rational view, therefore, necessitates a great deal of reading between the lines. Nevertheless, the class basis of early Christianity is obvious. In no other religion of the period is the term "slave" used as a title of honour. New Testament writers call themselves "slaves of Jesus Christ" (in our version the word is unwarrantably softened into "servants"), and apply the same designation to their readers. Celsus, the second-century critic of the Christians, accuses them of appealing only to ignorant people, slaves, and general riff-raff. We know that the inducements offered to converts were not exclusively spiritual, and that the Christian Church was among other things a big friendly society disbursing benefits to its necessitous members. We know too that early Christianity was essentially an urban religion. Its centres were the great cities of the Roman Empire—Antioch, Alexandria, Rome itself—with their multitudes of slaves and freedmen uprooted from the communities to which they had once belonged and from the social and religious ties associated with them. The very word "pagan"—meaning "countryman"—tells us that the agricultural districts, where the old nature-religions were still a living force, were the last to be converted.

At first, as we know, the Roman government regarded Christianity as a political danger; then little by little they perceived that it might have its uses from their point of view. It is interesting to note that the partnership between the Church and the Empire established under Constantine and his successors met with resistance not only from the pagan side, but also from the Christian. The Donatist heretics in northern Africa, supported by bands of fugitive slaves and peasants known as Circumcelliones, raised the slogan, "What has the emperor

to do with the Church?", and the movement had to be suppressed by the Christian emperors. The question arises whether earlier Christianity may have contained revolutionary elements which Church historians and apologists have for obvious reasons omitted to mention, and of which the Donatist movement may have been a final manifestation.

As Roman civilization decayed trade and town industry went to pieces, and the economic basis of society shifted from slavery to serfdom: that is, instead of gangs of slaves working under overseers the land was cultivated by peasants bound to the soil and obliged to render services or pay a fixed part of the produce to the landowner. This was not entirely an innovation. Serfdom had existed alongside slavery in many parts of the ancient world, and it is difficult to say which of them is really the older. The decline of slavery was not due to religious but to economic causes. When the Roman Empire ceased to expand slaves ceased to be cheap, and as they increased in economic value they obtained more consideration. The status of the slave improved, while that of the nominally free peasant deteriorated, until by the early Middle Ages there was little but a legal distinction left between the two, and in due course even that disappeared.

As ancient civilization was based on the distinction between slave and freeman, so medieval civilization was based on that between serf and lord. In each case the key to history is to be found in the struggle for the surplus product. The biggest landowner during the Middle Ages, and therefore the biggest absorber of the surplus product, was the Catholic Church. From the time when temporal rulers first discovered that the Church was a useful political ally, they endowed it lavishly with land, until one-third of the soil of Western Europe and the British Isles passed into clerical or monastic hands. As the Church became a feudal magnate it followed, as night follows day, that the Church became corrupt. From the time of Bede, who wrote before England had been Christian a hundred years, right on to the Reformation, there is not a time in which we do not read of the laziness, avarice, and profligacy of monks and clergy, and this not from their enemies, but from chroniclers who were monks or clergy themselves; for during most of this period no one else could read or write. Idealizers of the Middle Ages can be recommended to take a course of reading in William of Malmesbury or Matthew Paris. There is nothing surprising in the corruption of the medieval Church. It is the nature of ruling classes to look after themselves first and foremost. The fact stares us in the face throughout medieval history that monks and clergy attached more importance to the conservation of Church property and the punctual payment

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of Church dues—tithes, firstfruits, and so forth—than to any other consideration whatever.

The heretical movements of the Middle Ages represented the reaction of the more thinking part of the unprivileged classes against the wealth and consequent corruption of the Church. The typical heretics of the heyday of the Middle Ages were the Cathari or Albigenses. This sect was very widespread and went by an extraordinary number of different names, some indicating the classes of people who joined it. Thus they were called, among other things, Patarenes, or "ragmen," and Tixerands, or "weavers." Monkish chroniclers, who are of course violently prejudiced against them, describe them as clownish and unlearned people, obtuse to reason and incorrigible by authority, who can very seldom be converted to the true faith. Among their tenets were that the world was created by the devil, and that the true end of life was to escape from rebirth by asceticism. The Catholic Church was in their eyes the Church of the devil. Naturally, wherever they had a following the income of the Church seriously diminished. Consequently in the thirteenth century they were exterminated by fire and sword in the crusade ordered by Pope Innocent III.

From the fourteenth century on a new kind of heresy comes to the fore. Catharism had been merely a passive protest; henceforth we meet with active protests, the origin of which is to be sought in changing material conditions. The people of the towns—the bourgeoisie in the original sense of the word—were beginning to count. Organized in their merchant guilds and craft guilds, and protected by charters purchased from the king or some other lord, they set up in each town a ring-fence of monopoly behind which they practised their crafts or trades free from feudal interference. Runaway serfs settled in the towns to learn a trade and become free of the guild. Not all, however, who wished were allowed to do so. The guilds aimed at limiting competition, and men who could not set up as masters had to be content to work as journeymen, becoming the nucleus of a town proletariat. The great struggle of the later Middle Ages was between the feudal lords, especially the Church, and the growing bourgeoisie. In the middle of the fourteenth century the great plague called the Black Death reduced the population by nearly half and, as it killed off proportionately more of the poor than of the rich, completely dislocated the supply of labour. For a time the labourers were able to dictate terms to the landowners, and the latter found themselves as a class getting poorer. Just at this juncture Wycliffe drew attention to the enormous amount of land in the hands of monks and clergy, and suggested that

it should be confiscated and given to laymen. We need not attribute economic motives to him, but it is easy to see how readily his teaching appealed to the economic motive in others. It appealed immensely to impoverished lay land-owners who wanted to mend their fortunes at the expense of the Church, to successful merchants who wanted to set up as gentry, and to whom the idea of getting a slice of Church land cheap or gratis was very attractive, and to many smaller people who resented clerical exactions. Naturally the attack on Church property led to an attack on Church doctrine. Much land had been given to the Church by pious benefactors on condition that masses should be said for their souls. Confiscation of such land was plainly sacrilegious unless you were prepared to maintain that the Mass was a fraud; which is precisely what the Wycliffites in the end came to maintain. The economic attack on the Church failed for the time because the great lords were so frightened by the Peasant Revolt of 1381 that they discountenanced Wycliffe, and the smaller men were not strong enough to carry their point alone. But, as we know, the Reformation was only postponed.

Before it actually came the face of the world was changed in many ways. The old English nobility liquidated one another in the Wars of the Roses, and thereby crippled the feudal system politically. The merchant class, who enjoyed a monopoly of wholesale trade, amassed money, bought land from impoverished nobles, founded grammar schools (thereby undermining the monopoly of the Church in education), and developed the clothing industry in country districts under the domestic system. This increased the demand for wool and led to that widespread conversion of arable land into pasture and eviction of villagers from their holdings of which Sir Thomas More writes in his *Utopia*. Thus the two necessary components of modern capitalism, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, grew up side by side. Lastly, the discovery of America and the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope opened up a wider field for trade.

Catholic historians like Mr. Belloc often write as if the Reformation were the cause of the capitalist system. This is a reversal of the truth. Capitalism already existed, and the Reformation was the first great battle which it won against feudalism. Of six grievances which the House of Commons put forward against the Church in 1529 four were economic, the two most important being the excessive amount of land in ecclesiastical hands and the competition of monastic houses in trade, particularly the wool trade. Such facts lent enormous driving force to the attack on the monasteries. Their forcible dissolution and the gift or sale of their land to

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lay owners—many of them, like the Russells and Cecils, of middle-class extraction—were the most momentous events of the Reformation. Important too was the abolition of Catholic holidays, which was justified avowedly on economic grounds. In 1536 a number of such days were abolished by law, “and specially such as fell in the harvest time, the keeping of which was much to the hindrance of the gathering in of corn, hay, fruit, and other such like necessary and profitable commodities.”<sup>1</sup>

Protestantism was *par excellence* the religion of the rising middle class, but it was also essentially a sixteenth-century product. Its essence was the repudiation of the authority of the Catholic hierarchy in faith and morals. To-day such an attack would take a Rationalist form. In the sixteenth century it could not, because the scientific development which is the basis of Rationalism had not yet begun. Those who wished to attack the Church had to use such weapons as they possessed. The chief controversial armoury in that age was the Bible, so that the revolt against the Church took for the time being the form of an appeal to Scripture. Protestants thought they were going back to primitive Christianity. In reality they were going forward along a road the end of which would have surprised them. Their divergent interests led them to very different views of the kind of authority to be set up in place of that which they had overthrown. The rich merchants and landowners who came to the top in Tudor England, who helped themselves to the abbey lands, and who took shares in profitable new trading monopolies like the East India Company, naturally tried to call a halt to the Reformation when it had served their purpose. To them the Church of England, with its bishops appointed by the Crown and its liturgy laid down by Act of Parliament, seemed an admirable instrument for throwing a halo of sanctity round a state of things which enabled them to run the country and to secure a lion's share of the good things that were going. Those excluded from this charmed circle—the ordinary traders, yeoman farmers, and middle classes generally—were not so happy. They wished to get rid of the bishops as they had got rid of the Pope, and to have a say in Church and State themselves. Calvin became their prophet. We are apt to associate Calvinism rather too exclusively with the doctrine of Predestination. We must be careful how we do so. Calvin did not invent that doctrine. It was part of Christianity from the beginning; it is affirmed by Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. But while the Catholic Church kept Predestination in cold storage where the multi-

<sup>1</sup> *Hall's Chronicle.*

tude were concerned, Calvin made it public property. From the Catholic point of view that was outrageous, for it destroyed the importance of the priestly office. The real importance of Calvinism lay in the fact that it had no need of priests, and still less therefore of bishops. Its congregations elected their own ministers. In the words of Engels, "the Kingdom of God was republicanized." That was the reason why the kings and ruling classes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries objected to Calvinism, and why the middle-class revolutionaries of that period nailed it to their masthead. The battle was fought out in the English Revolution of the seventeenth century, which in the main was a class struggle between, on the one hand, the large landowners and monopolists, who were for Church and King, and on the other the middle-class men, who were Puritans and Parliamentarians.

The seventeenth century is also famous as marking the real beginning of modern scientific development. This too had its economic basis. Galileo could not have made his discoveries without a telescope. Telescopes were not made in any numbers until 1608, and they were first made in Holland, where they were in demand for navigational purposes. The development of modern astronomy was thus causally connected with the opening up of the ocean highways. Both Bacon and Descartes expected science to yield practical as well as theoretical results. Bacon looked to it "to produce worthy effects, and to endow the life of man with infinite commodities." Descartes hoped to discover a means by which, "knowing the force and action of fire, water, air, the stars, the heavens, and all the other bodies that surround us as distinctly as we know the various crafts of our artisans, we might also apply them in the same way to all the uses to which they are adapted, and thus render ourselves the lords and possessors of nature." Modern science was from its very beginning power-thought—that is, thought with a view to acquiring power or control over nature; and its progress has been intimately connected with the progress of methods of production and communication.

These developments fostered that way of thinking which we call Materialism. Under this name we may for practical purposes include Deism; for the God of the Deists, like a constitutional monarch, reigned but did not govern. When man, instead of being at the mercy of nature, begins to control nature he ceases to believe in miraculous interventions and becomes a Determinist, for the simple reason that Determinism works. Lecky in his *Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe* draws attention to the fact that belief in witchcraft ceased, not through the force of argument, but through "the spirit of the age." Not being a Materialist, Lecky could not

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explain the spirit of the age. Historical Materialism explains it by the reaction of methods of production and exchange upon human habits of thought.

The early Deists and Materialists were either, like Hobbes, dependents of the aristocracy, or, like Bolingbroke, members of it, and did not intend their Freethought for popular consumption. Materialism first became a revolutionary theory in the eighteenth century in the hands of the Encyclopædists. The economic and political changes which had been carried out in England by the Reformation and the Great Rebellion had still to be carried out in France; and the French bourgeoisie in their struggle with the clergy and the nobility found in Deism and Materialism intellectual weapons ready to hand. Calvinism dropped into the background; for when you are in a position to fight your intellectual battle with scientific facts wrangles over Biblical texts lose their importance.

Just as the characteristic ideology of primitive communities is the kind of religion described in *The Golden Bough*, just as the characteristic ideology of a servile or feudal society is a "revealed" religion of the type of Christianity, so the characteristic ideology of expanding industrialism is Materialism—veiled so far as necessary under some respectable alias, and combined with some sort of lip-service to official religion, which is useful as an "opium" for workmen and women, but plays no part in the beliefs of men of affairs. And here we are faced with a paradox. It would seem to follow that as our conquests over nature become more and more extensive, and as scientific theories are more and more verified by the test of practice, our educated classes should grow more and more Materialistic. This is not at present the case. Materialists are found to-day among the younger scientific workers, in the ranks of the small Freethought Movement, and in the small Communist Party, but not at the universities, nor even at the meetings of the British Association. The Materialistic conception of history has the peculiar merit of explaining scientifically, among other phenomena, the modern boycott of Materialism. The phenomenon is rooted in modern economic development. Capitalism, like every previous form of civilization, in order to exist requires a surplus product (over and above what is necessary to maintain its workers), out of which the various categories of non-producers can subsist. But, unlike previous forms of civilization, capitalism, in order to exist, has to turn its whole product into money. In an industrialized community we are obliged to sell what we produce; and for ascertainable reasons the home market is unable to absorb the whole. During the nineteenth century this presented no insuperable

problem. The world was industrially undeveloped, and England was its workshop. There were, of course, recurrent crises; but they were of short duration. On the whole industry leapt ahead, and people believed in its endless expansion and progress. Science, which had played so great a part in this expansion, enjoyed immense prestige. Those were the days of Tyndall's Belfast address, of Huxley's triumphant duels with Gladstone, and of the vogue of Herbert Spencer. Scientific Materialism under one alias or another became almost respectable, though never quite so; for the bulk of educated people were convinced that religion must be kept up in the interests of social stability, and shrank from the admission that the Churches organized for this purpose were founded on falsehood. The Church of England is the religion of the old school tie. Still, by the last decade of the nineteenth century Agnosticism had become a fashionable label; and Agnosticism, as Engels points out, is only "shamefaced Materialism."

But from about that time material conditions changed. Other countries developed their industries and became our competitors, and England ceased to be the workshop of the world. Economic rivalry led to the scramble for colonies and spheres of influence in Africa and Asia; that led to naval and military competition, and that in turn to the World War, which in turn made things worse. Industrial expansion no longer appeared as the unqualified blessing it had seemed in the nineteenth century. To-day economic policies are being directed to the restriction of production. Brazil is burning coffee, America is ploughing-in cotton. With economic shrinkage goes a shrinkage of belief in progress and a shrinkage of faith in science. It is not merely the clergy who call for a "scientific holiday." It is not long since Sir Alfred Ewing, the late President of the British Association, gave public utterance to the general defeatism. Year by year scientists like Sir Arthur Eddington and Sir James Jeans publish books of which the tenour is that science tells us little or nothing about the universe, and that we are free to believe, and indeed had much better believe, in some God suitable to our degree of credulity. These books are widely read and favourably reviewed, while those with a contrary tendency attract little notice. The dominant mental atmosphere is reactionary; and the dominant mental atmosphere is causally connected with the environment of economic decline in which we live. Those who wish to change this atmosphere, and who agree with the foregoing analysis of its causes, will draw their own conclusions.



In religion the return of dogma is no less marked. The movement of contemporary intellectuals into the Roman Catholic Church has achieved the dimensions of a stampede. There was always Belloc, to whom there was added Chesterton; but now there are Waugh and Lunn, Knox and Hemingway and Cocteau. What chiefly struck me in a recent controversy with Mr. Lunn was not that he and I should differ—differences between controversialists are expected—but that when a difference occurred he *knew* that he was right, whereas I only *thought* that he was wrong. Matters which for me were incapable of precise determination were for him completely and unalterably settled.

I have recently enjoyed the ambiguous experience of meeting a number of young Buchmanites. I found that in point of knowledge they had on almost every issue the advantage of me. They *knew* that the universe is planned and purposive, that mind or rather spirit is at the heart of things, that ultimate reality is a personal creative God, that God communicates with them, guides them, shares His experiences with them; and, since they *knew*, to discuss was a waste of time. Now Buchmanism is a characteristic creed of modern youth. It is the religious counterpart of Fascism and Communism.

As with politics and religion, so with science. The tale of dogmatism has been taken up by the physicists. That the ultimate nature of things is a universal mind stuff; that it is a mathematically-minded but personal deity; that it nourishes indeterminacy lurking at its heart—these and other dicta of famous physicists about matters which cannot be known are, alas, only too well known. Even the future is mapped out, and a *reductio ad expansum*, or a subsidence of all that is into the stagnation of cool radiation, is announced as the end for which creation travails.

Now this assumption of knowledge on the part of scientists in regard to the ultimate nature of things is new. It is also surprising. Our race, it is by now sufficiently clear, is in its infancy. For some twelve hundred million years there has been life; for about a million (conceding the benefit of the doubt to all dubious examples such as Neanderthalers) human life. For some three thousand years, again on a generous interpretation, human beings have been civilized and indulged in thought. It is not clear how long our race will persist, but, assuming that no untoward accident occurs to the sun, the period during which it will be hot enough to maintain conditions favourable to life is estimated at about twelve hundred thousand million years, or a thousand times as long as the whole past of life. Compared with the period during which they may continue to think,

human beings can scarcely be said to have begun to think at all. Nevertheless they have, it seems, already thought to such purpose that they have reached certainty in regard to the ultimate nature, constitution, and meaning of the universe. It is instructive to compare this attitude with Thomas Henry Huxley's profession of Agnosticism: "I was quite sure that I had not a certain 'gnosis' which Atheists, Theists, Pantheists, Christians" (and I suppose we must now add "physicists") "all possessed, so I took thought and invented what I conceive to be the appropriate title of 'Agnostic.'" Huxley's attitude seems to be the only reasonable one in the circumstances. The more we enlarge the area of the known, the more also we enlarge its area of contact with the unknown; and we know, or so I should have thought, too much about the world to-day to think that we know anything for certain.

What are the causes of the contemporary return to dogma? They cannot, it is obvious, be even enumerated in a short article. Two, however, deserve special mention because of their interest to Rationalists. First there is the decline of orthodox religion. As the God in the skies recedes, a figure is required to take his place. Throughout history man's allegiance has wavered between vertical and horizontal gods. The Greek gods were horizontal. They descended, that is to say, on to the same plane as mortals—their residence on Olympus was never very far above it—walked and talked with them, fought with them, and made love to them. For the last two thousand years they have been ousted from popular favour by vertical gods, especially in countries where the cloudy skies afford the person of the vertical god an adequate support. Two thousand years is a long innings for any god, and it may be that it is coming to an end. Rationalists have hoped that he would have no successors, but there are signs that they may have been too optimistic, and that, as the vertical god of Christianity shrinks into a mere peg for pious aspiration floating in a mist of platitude, horizontal gods, clear-cut and definite, complete with raincoat and moustache, are coming again into their own. "Hitler is lonely; so is God. Hitler is like God." The syllogism has had, I understand, an enormous vogue in modern Germany.

If this suggestion has any validity, what conclusions are we, as Rationalists, entitled to draw? That man is still in the worshipping stage of his development. So ingrained is the demand for gods that the effect of depriving him of one is to cause him to manufacture another. Man, in other words, is not yet adult. He still needs his spiritual toys. The conclusion seems all too likely.....

Secondly, there is the greatly increased control over men's minds with which science has endowed the holders of political power. Just as the advance of science has concentrated effective military power into fewer and fewer hands, rendering mere numbers impotent against the tank, the bomber, and the machine-gun, so it has concentrated the power of opinion in the hands of those who control the wireless, the press, and the cinema. When Herr Hitler, in March, 1934, announced his scheme for the expenditure of £77,000,000 on public works to reduce unemployment in Germany his speech was relayed over the wireless to 19,500 meetings, at which it is estimated that not less than three million people heard "the leader." This new power over men's minds is undoubtedly a serious danger to the independence of their thought. The dictators of the modern world are adepts at its exploitation, and do not hesitate to use it for the inoculation of dogmas—racial, social, political, and even religious.

It is unfortunately the case that modern education provides this newly accessible mind of the common man with few defences against those who seek to use it for their own purposes. Modern education tends to provide information rather than to create intelligence, to manufacture an outlook rather than to develop a mind. If, then, the capacity freely to form opinions on the basis of evidence is not to disappear in England, as it is largely disappearing over large areas of the Continent, education must aim, more deliberately than it has done hitherto, at the inculcation of scepticism. A scepticism so ingrained as to have become instinctive will inoculate the mind against the acceptance of ready-made opinions as a substitute for truth. Just as knowledge of comparative religion is an antidote to the absolute truth claim of any one religious myth, so acquaintance with the history books of several nations is an antidote to the absolute truth claim of any national legend. Let English children study in French history books accounts of the Hundred Years' War. Let them be brought up to read party newspapers giving different party accounts of the same political event. Take care that their attention is drawn to the number of times that Lenin and Trotsky were "assassinated" in the English papers during the early years of the Russian Revolution. The complete recipe for the production of scepticism by education is not as yet known ; but this, at least, seems to be reasonably true—that the more divergent and self-contradictory dogmas on the same issue with which the child is brought into contact, the less likely is he to accept any of them. For to realize that dogmas diverge—that they do more, that they contradict one another—is to realize also that no dogma is true ; it is only an opinion masquerading as truth.

## “LEFT IN THE LURCH

By A. GOWANS WHYTE

THE writer of a book on the Jewish Problem recently announced in the *Times* that he “would be grateful for constructive, candid, and considered opinions and ideas how to solve the troubles of this ancient race.” Optimism of this buoyant kind is, in these disillusioned days, a rare and refreshing phenomenon, but I am afraid that his gratitude must have remained unexercised. If anyone possessed a solution for the troubles of the Jews, persecuted as they have been for centuries by the Christians, and now harried by the Neo-Pagans, he could guarantee an earthly paradise for all the less unfortunate races. Yet where do we find, where can we hope to find, a people whose discontents do not present a problem?

Utopia, for the philosopher and poet alike, has always resided in some past golden age or in a vague vision of the future. Whatever is is imperfect—if not intolerable. The common man, however, has never lost his hope that somewhere in the world there is to be found a delectable land where men still taste the undiluted joy of life. He seeks it in those backwaters as yet, by a miracle, undisturbed by the noisy stream of civilization, and he counts himself happy if, during only a brief holiday, he can discover a corner where the old simplicities and freedom still survive.

“Beachcomber,” for example, claims that there are no less than two spots remaining unspoiled in the artificial playground that stretches from Marseilles to Ventimiglia. He wisely declines to disclose where they lie; but the pilgrim of peace may discover others by the simple process of eliminating every region where the agents of *turismo* operate. In my own case I was guided to a happy land—and not a mere corner, but a wide territory of mountain and sea-coast—by the remark of an agent that it had been “left in the lurch.”

It is a land which had a great attraction for the ancient Greeks. They found there the generous sunshine, the halycon breezes, the fertile soil, the groves and rocky headlands and sheltered bays that recalled their home. Evidence of their occupation not only remains in the form of statues and ruins; it survives in the people themselves. A favourite

sport on the littoral is the sailing of small craft formed by two narrow canoes fastened side by side with deck boards and fitted with a single sail ; they are navigated by manipulating the sail and by poising the body, now on one side and now on the other. Capsizing being a normal incident, the young men who revel in this sport wear bathing dress (of minimum dimensions), and when they balance on the swaying deck they are living replicas of Greek sculpture, startling in their fidelity to the classical models of physical perfection.

Other signs of a noble heredity may be discovered, though it would be straining the thread of Greek descent to attribute them all to a single source. The spirit of the people is singularly independent ; they are ready at any moment to declare themselves a self-governing and self-sufficient nation ; and they frankly, and not without cause, regard themselves as the most stable element in the nation to which they belong. They are distinguished by their capacity for work ; and the moralist of the Samuel Smiles type is free to draw his favourite conclusion from that fact. While other sections of the national unit are known everywhere for their graceful inactivity, their preference for to-morrow as the time (if ever) for action, and their aristocratic belief that they were born to be maintained by others, these people labour in their vineyards, fields, and forests from dawn to dusk, and pursue handicrafts and industries with almost northern assiduity.

The obverse of their energy, in a land which seems devised for passive enjoyment, is their capacity for play. Their holy days are true holidays. Towns and villages empty themselves in bands that wander along the sea-shore and over the hills, there to picnic in true gipsy fashion ; they carry with them rabbits and fowls to be killed, prepared, and cooked over a wood fire built between stones, in the shade of pine trees. Their meals have the comprehensiveness and thoroughness expected from people who hold fast to the first principles of life, and if they are careless of the heaps of feathers, bottles, and kindred litter they strew around them, how many people in this sophisticated country can cast a stone ?

Were one of the ancient Greek settlers to return to these rolling acres he would find the processes of agriculture carried on very much as of old. The plough is still little more than a pointed stick dragged through the ground ; the beat of the flail is still heard, and the chaff is winnowed in the wind. Here and there, on the sun-baked earth, one finds a green patch irrigated in primitive fashion through channels opened and closed in succession to the flow of water drawn from a well. The vineyards, too, have probably not changed their aspect or their methods for centuries.

The fact, however, of such survivals is less remarkable

than the manner in which the spirit of the past lives serenely, reposefully, in spite of intrusions of the present. Networks of electric lines, carrying light to every peasant's cottage, do not obtrude as an anachronism. The harnessing of an electric motor to a well does not rob it of its traditional charm. Motor-cars roll over tracks traced for mules or donkeys without evoking a sigh for the ages before speed; and even when giant motor-coaches carry their loads of holiday makers in a roar to the sea one regards them unmoved. There is something spacious and enduring about this land which absorbs all these elements of modernity and subdues their harshness.

The peasant, also, accepts the mechanical aids of the new world without losing the graces of the old. Let the wayfarer rest for a moment near a cottage; the peasant will invite him indoors to his home, and in accordance with the sacred laws of hospitality it becomes for the time being the visitor's own. Let him lose his way in the tangle of paths that lead from anywhere to nowhere in particular; the workers in the field will take infinite pains, and exercise all their eloquence of gesture, to guide him aright. Services little or great are rendered with a smile, and the uninitiated visitor who seeks to reward them in the manner evolved into a cursed system in less backward countries will learn how courtesy can conquer offence. One evening our village by the sea was visited by a party of young men, one a born singer and the others extremely competent performers on the guitar and mandoline. To listen to their music, to watch the intent faces of their audience, and to see them at last rise and go away with no more thanks given or expected than murmured good nights—that was a rich and instructive experience.

The only truly alien element in this region appears to be the priest, although the country as a whole is one which carries a history of fanatical allegiance to Rome. In France even the most remote village church shows, at almost any hour of the day, some sign of life; candles burn before shrines, and at least one or two women are kneeling in prayer. But here the churches, ornate as they are with gilt and carving and stained glass, stand empty for hours at a time. The priest himself is rarely visible in the streets, and when he does walk abroad he passes unregarded.

On two occasions, when I happened to see a priest engaged on official duties, the indifference of the people was manifest. The first was a humble tragedy—the drowning of a peasant seized with cramp; and after his rescuers had, with no little gallantry and skill, brought him ashore, and doctors and helpers had done their utmost to restore him, the priest was summoned to render what post-mortem services lay within

his power. The second was a princely tragedy—literally so—and the funeral car of the member of a once great ruling house was preceded by a motor-car, carrying a silver cross fixed upright on the running board and bearing an ecclesiastic gorgeously robed and accompanied by two acolytes. But neither the humble parish priest nor the lordly dignitary of the one true Church received a solitary sign of reverence from the gravely watching people. The attitude of the crowd was not positively hostile; it had the curious cold reserve born of indifference and native courtesy.

Some day, when I too am left in the lurch, I shall retire to this country, where the twilight of the glory that was Greece is to be found lingering in a rainbow charm. Perhaps, as one is apt to do on first acquaintance with something beautiful, I have idealized its features; nevertheless I have an inner confidence that its virtue is deep enough to make its appeal endure. So far as I could discover, this proud, laborious, and smiling people has only one vice. Smuggling is rife, and demands an armed patrol more numerous than the police. Smuggling, however, is a practice which, in the past at least, has been amply condoned in the most respectable circles. Not so very long ago, in this most self-appreciative of all countries, parson and squire alike thought no ill of possessing kegs of old French brandy which had been successfully "run." Surely, if Christian gentlemen saw fit to make merry on illicit cognac, my friends over the way can pardonably soothe their leisure and inspire their meditation with tobacco which has the free and independent flavour they love.

# HISTORY AND SOCIAL IDEALISM

BY DR. JAMES HENRY BREASTED

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[This article is based on an address delivered at the Semi-Centenary of the American Historical Association. For this reason it naturally contains a number of allusions to American affairs, but its theme is of such wide general interest and is developed in such an attractive manner that the Editor feels justified in publishing the article in the *Rationalist Annual*.]

**B**ETWEEN the composition of the early chapters of Genesis and the life of Jesus there was a period of possibly eight centuries. We may say therefore that there were some twenty-five generations between the author of Cain's question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. iv, 9), and the scheming lawyer who asked Jesus "Who is my neighbour?" (Luke x, 29). The sense of social obligation grew as it passed down through the lives of some twenty-five generations in Palestine. It expanded beyond the circle of one's family, suggested by the question about one's brother, to the larger circle of one's neighbours, viewed in the broadest sense to include even more than one's own community. What place in human history must we assign to such social evolution in the ancient East, and does it throw any light upon our present efforts to carry through a vast programme of reform and legislation inspired by social idealism?

All historians of any standing now recognize the fact that Hebrew ideals of conduct were the product of early social experience; but there is little or no recognition of the fact that the social idealism which arose in Palestine was the outcome of a vastly older chapter of human development among the surrounding Oriental peoples, especially the Egyptians. Over two thousand years before the story of Cain had raised his provocative question in Palestine the same question had not only arisen but had been answered in the affirmative by the social thinkers on the Nile.

The earliest reflective morality, disclosing human conduct as socially approved or disapproved and therefore revealing for the first time a dawning sense of social responsibility, is inscribed on a black stone slab in the British Museum. Dating from the eighth century B.C., it is an ancient copy of a much older original belonging to the middle of the



fourth millennium before the Christian era. It therefore contains ideas some five thousand five hundred years old, the oldest of man's ideas that have ever descended to us from the past. After 3,000 B.C. it was followed by the appearance on the monuments, quite commonly, of a significant Egyptian word, probably much older, which may be rendered "right, righteousness, truth, justice." In this Egyptian word "Maat" we must recognize the earliest historical emergence of these ideas. Ptahhotep, the earliest great social prophet of the ancient East or of human history anywhere, summed up his ideal of conduct in this word "Maat" when he said: "Established is the man whose standard is righteousness (Maat), who walketh according to its way." This remarkable word, comprising in it, as its usage shows, these great sublimations of human experience, "right, righteousness, truth, justice," by its first appearance on the monuments, is for us a significant landmark. It rises like a triumphant signal disclosing the fact that mankind had entered a new world of imperishable inner values. For ages men had been fighting enemies attacking from without, but this Egyptian word "Maat" disclosed to mankind for the first time the adversaries within.

This word, therefore, is a symbol of the greatest change known to us in the entire career of man—one which gradually transformed his life, and which I like therefore to call "the great transformation." For it lifted man, if not from a wholly conscienceless world, at least from a world in which conscience had not yet become a social force, and it shifted him for the first time into a great arena of social responsibility where boundless possibilities awaited him.

After 3,000 B.C. the great men of the splendid age which created the pyramids of Gizeh were able to look back upon an impressive past, which, after beginning with centuries of small and local city kingdoms, had culminated in a thousand years of national union from about the thirty-fifth to about the twenty-fifth century B.C. It is important to realize that this thousand years was man's first uninterrupted millennium of national experience—that is, of human development in unified national form. It presents a prospect of steadily moving evolution, in which a nation of some millions of souls for the first time on our globe rose to the creation of an imposing structure of organized human life capable of enduring a thousand years. It was this impressive vision of an enduring state and its ever-functioning organization which contributed substantially to a larger, more comprehensive meaning of the Egyptian word "Maat," till it had come to signify not only "justice," "truth," and "righteousness," but also a great national order, a kind of moral order of the world, identified with the rule of the Pharaoh.

The social prophet Ptahhotep glories in this supremacy of Maat, as a thing established for eternity: "Great is Maat; its dispensation endures." When we recall that one of the meanings of Maat is "truth" we recognize the Egyptian wise man's saying as the earliest version of our copy-book proverb, *Magna est veritas et prævalebit*, emerging here in the Pyramid Age twenty-five hundred years before it first appeared in Western Asia in the Third Book of Ezra (iv, 35). It was a thousand years of such organized government which gave the Egyptian sages of the Pyramid Age a majestic picture of the actual operation and beneficence of Maat, and imbued it with a spacious historical meaning which it could not otherwise have gained. Having arisen as an individual and personal matter, as a designation of right conduct in the family or immediate community, Maat had then gradually passed into a larger arena as the spirit of a *national* guidance and control of human affairs—a control in which orderly administration is suffused with moral conviction. There was thus created for the first time in human thinking a realm of universal values, and in conceiving the divine ruler of such a realm the Egyptians were moving on the road towards monotheism.

When the power and greatness of the Egyptian sovereign had tragically declined at the end of that great thousand years of national development, one of the Pharaohs himself, the earliest known social thinker to occupy a throne, said to his son: "More acceptable is the virtue of the upright man than the ox of him that doeth iniquity." If we raise some question regarding "the upright man," there is plenty of evidence to show that he was one who dealt justly and righteously with his fellows. Then a writing board in the British Museum tells us that a century or two later there were unfortunately not many of his kind left. This board bears the lamentations of a socially-minded priest of Heliopolis as he contemplates the social scene and makes a great discovery. He announces it in the following words: "The poor man hath no strength to save himself from him that is stronger than he." Here is the earliest recorded concern for "the forgotten man," and the discovery of him by his idealistic contemporaries was part of the earliest known social disillusionment, which thus emerged over four thousand years ago, at the close of that thousand years of what the Egyptians believed to have been the unshaken supremacy of justice (Maat). Thus we discern that in the centuries before 2,000 B.C. Maat had broken down, for this British Museum writing board records it in the lament of our priest of Heliopolis: "Righteousness (Maat) is cast out and iniquity is in the midst of the council-hall."

At this point, in the course of probably two thousand years of national life, organized humanity, having built up some seemingly imperishable values, was beginning to discover that they were being completely swept away. It is the earliest known age of disillusionment. To us who are still battling with the same problems it is appealingly interesting to follow the thoughts and the courageous response of these men of four thousand years ago as they found themselves involved in the first such catastrophe which the written documents of mankind have preserved to us.

In the midst of the complete collapse of just government, overwhelmed by a riot of injustice, there were nevertheless men of social vision and courage who dared to dream of better days and to proclaim their faith in the possibility of a "New Deal." They were the earliest pamphleteers in a campaign for social justice. Their social tractates, lying mostly in tatters in European museums, ring with denunciation of corruption and injustice. They call loudly for better government. Out with corruption! That has a familiar ring. Had they been able to look down the ages that were to follow, these men, in so far as we know the earliest to attempt such betterment, might have lost some courage.

It is important to notice that even the men of this remote age would not have called their New Deal *new*. They were striving for what they regarded as a restoration, and to some extent they were correct. In other words, some four thousand years ago the New Deal, as an age of alleged social idealism, had already lasted many centuries and had then broken down, leaving only sad memories and poignant regrets. That is a historical fact of some importance for our own present situation.

How was social justice to be restored? These ancient New Dealers believed that it could be established *by government*. That, too, has a familiar sound. Some of them were convinced that recovery could be launched by a generation of honest and just officials; others believed that it could be done by a righteous king as the saviour and regenerator of society. One of the champions of just officials wrote a treatise on the subject. It was a picturesque tale, which we call "The Eloquent Peasant," telling of a dishonest overseer of an estate who robbed a defenceless peasant. The story then makes the oppressed peasant the typical "forgotten man," the advocate of all his class as he pleads his cause before the Grand Steward of Pharaoh. We hear him delivering no less than eight eloquent appeals for just treatment, which may be summed up in one of his glorifications of justice when he says: "Justice (Maat) is for eternity. It descendeth with him that doeth it into the grave, when he is placed in the coffin and laid in the earth. His name is not

effaced on earth, but he is remembered because of right..... But," he continues, "thou hast not given me requital for this good word which came out of the mouth of the Sun-god: 'Speak righteousness, do righteousness. For it is great, it is mighty, it is enduring.'"

This earliest tale of "the forgotten man" is a good illustration of the helplessness of honest officials if not supported by a just and benevolent sovereign. As already stated, there was another group of social thinkers of the time who recognized this and looked forward to the advent of such a righteous king. Among them was a social prophet, named Ipuwer, who has left us a tattered papyrus, now in the Leyden Museum. It bears his fragmentary treatise, in which he has put into a dramatic setting not only his passionate arraignment of the current social and governmental corruption, but also constructive admonitions looking towards the regeneration of society through the advent of an ideal sovereign who should bring in a golden age. Of this righteous ruler the ancient sage predicts: "He brings coolness to the flame [of the social conflagration]. It is said he is the shepherd of all men. There is no evil in his heart. When his herds are few he spends the day to gather them together, their hearts being fevered.....Where is he to-day? Doth he sleep perchance? Behold his might is not [yet] seen." This extraordinary picture discloses the fact that the golden dream of the thinkers in this far-off age already included the ideal ruler of spotless character and benevolent purposes, who would cherish and protect the poor and feeble and crush the wicked. The vision of such an ideal king is, of course, *Messianism* nearly fifteen hundred years before its appearance among the Hebrews.

A papyrus now in the museum of Leningrad contains an even more remarkable vision of the Messianic king, of whom it says: "The people of His time shall rejoice, the son of man shall make his name for ever and ever.....Righteousness (Maat) shall return to its place; unrighteousness shall be cast out."

Of no little interest to us at this point is the fact that the realization of this vision was to be accomplished by *government action*. When the Grand Vizier, the prime minister of the realm, assumed his important office as the greatest man in the government and second only to the king himself he was formally installed with impressive ceremony. Standing before the Sovereign, he listened to an extraordinary series of inaugural instructions. These, we may be certain, the social sages of the time had had an opportunity to edit. Let me translate one of the Pharaoh's more significant admonitions to the Vizier: "Look to the office of the vizier; be watchful

over all that is done therein. Forget not to judge justly. It is an abomination of God to show partiality.....Look upon him who is known to thee like him who is unknown to thee ; and him who is near the king like him who is far from [the king's house]." We are here reading the expressed will of the sovereign, which was therefore essentially the law of the land. It insists upon even-handed justice for "him who is unknown" to the Vizier, and likewise for "him who is far from the house of the king." The modern term "forgotten man" sounds like a translation of the "unknown" man in this ancient Egyptian state document. But to avoid any appearance of soft-hearted, milk-and-water philanthropy the king reminds his Vizier : "Lo, the dread of a prince is that he does justice."

There is contemporary evidence of the same policy among the feudal nobles of the same age in ruling their local baronies. One of the feudal barons of Benihasan has inscribed on the doorpost of his tomb-chapel the following record of his benevolent rule : "There was no citizen's daughter whom I misused, there was no widow whom I afflicted, there was no peasant whom I evicted, there was no herdsman whom I expelled, there was no gang-overseer whose people I took away for [unpaid] taxes. There was none wretched in my community, there was none hungry in my time. When years of famine came I ploughed all the fields of the Oryx barony [his estate].....preserving its people alive, furnishing its food so that there was none hungry therein. I gave to the widow as to her who had a husband. I did not exalt the great man above the small man in anything that I gave. Then came great Niles (inundations), rich in grain and all things, but I did not collect the arrears of the field." These measures for the benefit of the tillers of the soil, although they were established some four thousand years ago, might sound familiar to our Secretary of Agriculture, especially the statement : "I did not collect the arrears of the field." But when the ancient noble avers that he "ploughed *all* the fields" of his great barony I apprehend that our Department of Agriculture would not approve.

I am aware that this social experience of four thousand years ago along the Nile seems to us of the twentieth century to be vastly remote from our own life, and to have little or no direct bearing upon our present-day Western World. We do not feel it as a chapter of human experience leading directly to our own. We are, of course, all acquainted with the fact that from the remotest times the life of Egypt mingled with that of the Mediterranean. We all know that this influence from the Nile continued until much later times under the Roman Empire, when Egyptian civilization pro-

foundly affected that of the West. Nevertheless the impression persists among us that Egypt was an isolated social laboratory, having but slight significance for us after these thousands of years. This is evident in Secretary Wallace's remark that "the [Hebrew] prophets were the first people in recorded history to cry out in a loud clear voice concerning the problem of human justice." (*Statesmanship and Religion*, p. 18.)

This impression is wholly incorrect. Historical and archæological research has disclosed the fact that we of the Western World in Europe and America are closely united to the higher life of ancient Egypt through Palestine as a link. This fact has been strikingly illustrated by the discovery that the Old Testament Book of Proverbs contains a considerable section translated from an Egyptian book of proverbial wisdom. Our modern business men may be interested to know that they owe to ancient Egyptian wisdom their famous birthright proclaimed in the Book of Proverbs: "Seest thou a man skilful in business? He shall stand before kings."

We have now learned that Egyptian social thinking, in the physical form of papyrus rolls, was circulating in Palestine long before the Hebrews dwelt there. In the days of the great literary prophets the books of the Egyptian social sages were well known in Western Asia. We now understand why the message of the Hebrew prophets was at first little more than denunciation of social injustice; for Amos and Hosea, who began this type of social reform, lived thirteen or fourteen hundred years after the social prophets of Egypt had proclaimed the same message of social justice. Those Hebrew reformers whom we call the prophets drew their social gospel from Egyptian papyrus rolls, where, as we have seen, they read such words as these: "The poor man hath no strength to save himself from him that is stronger than he." Or: "The people of his time shall rejoice, the son of man shall make his name forever and ever..... Righteousness shall return to its place; unrighteousness shall be cast out."

The conception of a golden future, the Messianic Age, grew out of the social reflections of the Egyptian thinkers at a time when no such pictures of ideal human possibilities had as yet dawned upon the soul of man in Western Asia. It is now clear that social idealism, built up on lofty conceptions of character, the earliest known and, in that age, the *only* transcendentalism, arose in Egypt before 2,000 B.C.; for the actual books containing it were read in Jerusalem by the men who produced those Hebrew writings which we call the Old Testament.

How could it indeed have been otherwise? We are all

accustomed to the fact that the culture and the literatures of modern Europe have grown up saturated with our ancient inheritance from Greece and Rome. The Hebrews were in a similar situation, heirs of a great past not their own. They were a small and feeble folk, and their mighty neighbour on the Nile had held Palestine as its cultural and political province for many centuries, far longer than Rome held Gaul. It was inevitable, therefore, that the Hebrews in Palestine should be profoundly influenced in their thinking and their writing by the literature and civilization of their great overlord just across their southern desert border. If we of the Western World are linked with Palestine by a great and inspiring vision of social idealism, we are equally linked with Egypt whence came that vision, inherited by the Hebrews from some thousands of years of human experience on the Nile. We thus recognize Egypt as the ultimate source of our own heritage of social idealism.

The greatest constructive contribution which the recovery of the lost ancient oriental civilizations is making, therefore, is the restoration to us of an inheritance as broad as the horizon—a heritage left to us not by exclusive revelation to any one people but growing out of the life of man as a whole. Herein lies the greatest of all revelations that we can now demonstrate as a process of history, and as a result of man's social experience, his dawning comprehension of the difference between right and wrong conduct, and the supreme value of that growing comprehension as *an unfinished historical process*. It is the recovery of the lost civilizations which has enabled us to demonstrate that we have barely emerged from pre-moral darkness, that the dawn of conscience as a social force is just behind us, and that we still stand in the sunrise of the age of social idealism. Counting thirty generations to each thousand years, there are between us and the first social idealists of five thousand years ago only one hundred and fifty generations. Their social idealism has come to us through only one hundred and fifty groups of people.

In such investigation the land of the Nile is disclosed to us as a great social laboratory, with its earliest human life reaching back into those remote secular processes which have formed the present surface of the globe. The Nile valley has become for us a unique social arena, the only region on our globe where the struggle of advancing human life may be surveyed, from the appearance of physical man, through all the succeeding conquests of his rising career, until we see him catching the vision of human brotherhood in a golden age of universal goodwill.

In the twentieth century the recovery of early Oriental

civilizations has given to history a meaning which it never before possessed; for we are the first generation of men and women who are able to look back and, surveying the vast length of the entire human career, to follow the course of the great transformation as far as it has now advanced. Ours are the first minds so placed as to realize that the emergence of conscience and the rise of a sense of social responsibility after 3,000 B.C., which began the great transformation, were events of yesterday. Those events marked our Father Man's approach to the frontiers of a New Country. To-day we, his children, have hardly crossed those frontiers to begin the exploration of the New Country beyond. We stand in hesitation upon its outer margins; the beauty and sublimity of its distant prospects are hidden from us by the mists of human frailty, or blackened by the stifling smoke of greed, selfishness, and World War. Blinded and dismayed, we have stumbled and faltered with the foothills of the New Country all before us, while beyond them, if we would but lift our eyes, are glorious glimpses of the Delectable Mountains. Towards their still unscaled heights points the long and rising trail behind us, revealing, as it has risen from savagery to *character*, an unconquerable buoyancy of the human soul that has somehow issued from the deeps and risen so high.

In using the words "unconquerable buoyancy of the human soul" I am not employing a meaningless rhetorical phrase. I first used those words years ago in a university convocation address, after returning from a journey among the buried cities of the Ancient Orient, where I had felt as never before the meaning of the great fact that in the life which once pulsed in the streets of those now long-vanished cities man had for the first time risen from the conquest of material resources to visions of social idealism so vital that they have continued to be a power among us who are building Western civilization in the light of the great truths which still shine out of the East. I believe that those words "unconquerable buoyancy of the human soul" represent a reality, an irrefutable fact in human life, whether past or present—a fact with which such men as Oswald Spengler and all the other pessimists do not deal, for they seem totally unconscious of it.

It is a thing as demonstrably present in the spirit of man as the circulation of the blood in his physical body. What other force has been the driving power in that amazing transformation from savagery to character the beginnings of which we have been following? What carried the early man from purely material conquest to a recognition of the inner vision and its irresistible attraction? A philosopher like Bergson proclaims something which he calls the *élan*



*vital* ; but I am not dealing with philosophical conceptions, for I am not a philosopher. I am discussing *history*—the history of man and something which, especially in its earlier stages, is quite unmistakably disclosed as a force in man visibly present and operative for several hundred thousand years, and which I believe is still at work. No one can define it or tell what it is ; but, as in the force of gravitation, we can observe what it does.

I am using the present tense advisedly : we have only to look around us in this still unconquered depression to realize that the historical buoyancy of the human soul is still with us, even in the misguided efforts of the New Deal. I have not been able to read all the books of its leading protagonists, but I have been impressed with the sincerity which pervades some of their writing. This has been especially noticeable in the recent books of the Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. Wallace ; but if the social idealism of the New Deal is to succeed, it must be realized that the New Deal is *not new*, and that it represents a type of social idealism that is over four thousand years old. Some attention, therefore, must be given to history, to the revolutions of the past, and to the admonitions that come to us from human experience.

Mr. Wallace tells us in his latest book, *America Must Choose*, that "enduring social transformation such as our New Deal seeks is impossible of realization without changed human hearts. The classical economists, most orthodox scientists, and the majority of business men question whether human nature can be changed. I think it can be changed, because it has been changed many times in the past." Mr. Wallace's reference to the past leaves us wondering why he mentions economists, scientists, and business men, but does not refer to the historians. It is only human experience which can tell us whether "human hearts" can be permanently "changed." On this question, therefore, it is the historians and the prehistorians to whom we must turn for the facts.

In so far as *physical* changes are concerned, we may note that in the several hundred thousand years which lie between the recently discovered Pekin Man and the Neanderthal Man the human brain has increased about fifty per cent in size, but during the possibly thirty thousand years *since* the Neanderthal Man the brain we have to-day has not increased in size at all. The rate of man's physical development is therefore appallingly slow. Social idealism cannot wait to profit by any such changes.

At the *present* day, both in intellectual attitude and in resulting action, it is notorious that human nature lags amazingly far behind knowledge. The natural scientists are

especially aware of this human slowness to come up abreast of present knowledge, and Sir James Jeans laments it in his recent Presidential Address before the British Association for the Advancement of Science. In the attitude of modern men towards social idealism the same discouraging slowness to change and to act on the knowledge available is always in evidence.

And what does the past, as revealed by historical research, disclose to us regarding the possibility, and the rate, of change in human nature? We have seen that the ultimate sources from which we have inherited the fundamentals of social idealism lie in the Ancient Near East far back of the social thinking of the Hebrews who transmitted such ideals to us. We have seen that the Egyptian social sages preached help for the "forgotten man" and proclaimed the "New Deal" four thousand years ago; but what has been the result? It is a very instructive result, revealing mankind to-day almost as far from aggressive convictions regarding the necessity of a permanent New Deal as were the men who lived under the social idealists of Egypt 2,000 B.C.

Why has human advance in this matter been so slow? Underlying every idealistic effort is the fundamental fact long ago demonstrated by Locke that there are no "inborn ideas." We are confronted by the truth that *the attitude of the human spirit is created by each new generation for itself*. Each new generation starts "at scratch," because the "changed human hearts," which Mr. Wallace hopes for, are not permanently based on some physiologically enduring trait which can be physically transmitted from generation to generation, like red hair or a black skin. Nevertheless he is quite right—there have been changes in the hearts of men, but he seems to be under the impression that these changes are enduring transformations of the human spirit, something as permanent as physiological functions of the human body. On the contrary, such changes have been temporary emotional manifestations, which have survived into the next generation only as they have found permanent expression either in written form or in works of art, or have been brought to bear upon the next generation by oral admonition. This is perhaps the greatest reason, among a number, for the discouraging slowness of the human advance in these things of the spirit, for the high noon of that ethical day which history now shows is dawning in the life of man is still very far away. We may hope that the right kind of education will accelerate the advance, but the effort to perpetuate idealistic sentiments by legislation or by government action has been shown by history to be utterly futile. This is recognized by Mr. Wallace himself, as he wisely says that

his movement must depend for its effective force upon "an attitude that will flow not from external compulsion, but that will spring from the hearts of the people."

It is at this point that the message of history is priceless. Our hope for the future lies in the unquestioned historical fact which I have called "the Great Transformation"—the most important event in the history of the universe in so far as it is known to us. That was a change indeed, which transformed savage or barbarous human life and brought social idealism into the world—something which it had never known before. That change has, in varying measure, been successfully transmitted from generation to generation for over five thousand years. That fundamentally important fact is a tangible reason for believing that it will go on, for the change was in itself much more difficult than its subsequent transmission. The capacity for lofty human vision which first wrought the great transformation is still ours, and, although its light may be temporarily dimmed, it has never suffered complete or final eclipse.

Among a few million men organized into a nation social idealism first found national expression in the Nile valley beginning over five thousand years ago. Since then, after its development within the narrow confines of a single river valley, it found world-wide diffusion as the Hebrew writings transmitted this older social thinking of the Orient westward through Europe to America. Here in this new arena of continental spaciousness, stretching from ocean to ocean, we have begun a new chapter of human experience far transcending the limited stage where the earliest social idealism was born and began to exert its power as a social force one hundred and fifty generations ago. In these facts history reveals to us that, no matter how slowly it moves, the human spirit does advance, and we need not be deterred from continuing effort which must go on. The new deals of the future will be no more new than the present one. In this process wise admonition, enlightened by full knowledge of human experience, will carry us on far more safely than a great complex of government action. The lesson of that experience, or in other words the message of history, is unmistakable: it is upon *us* that the past has laid the high responsibility to carry on the unfinished process, which we have historical reason to believe will ultimately rise to some supreme culmination of the unfolding life of man on earth.

# THE SHADOWS DISAPPEAR

By ERNEST THURTLÉ

"There is no darkness but ignorance."—SHAKESPEARE.

FOR the child, and perhaps even the adult, darkness begets fears. It is not difficult to recall the emotions of a child awakened in a dark bedroom. Black corners were caves from which lurking evils might spring forth. Friendly and familiar objects of the day assumed strange and alarming shapes. Then slowly came the welcome dawn. As the light advanced, so the puzzling dark shadows one by one disappeared, and fears were set at rest. The childish mind found that there was a rational explanation for all those threatening apparitions which imagination had created out of the surrounding night, and all was well.

This familiar emotional experience of childhood may well serve as an illustration of the process through which humanity has passed, and is to some extent still passing, in connection with its gods and its religions. In the darkness of its ignorance the imagination of man has created a great variety of spectres and hobgoblins. These creations have been fertile sources of fear. Gradually the light of knowledge has appeared to dissipate the alarming shadows. Full dawn is not yet. There are still corners where the light has not penetrated to free all men and women from the fears which are born of ignorance. But, looking back and regarding human history as one continuing process, we may confidently claim that full dawn is well on the way.

There was the shadow of that dreadful God of Vengeance. Within recent centuries that has ceased to exist for the intelligent part of the community. Supernatural power to punish is no longer believed in. People have learned too much. So the theory of the God-sent pestilence is put aside in favour of sanitation, personal hygiene, isolation hospitals, and the other modern methods of dealing with epidemics. And the case is similar with the storms, the droughts, and the earthquakes which have figured so largely in history as divine scourges of culpable humanity. These things are now all recognized as the result of the play of natural forces, and God is ruled out as a factor in their

causation. Occasionally it is true that the Churches even to-day profess a belief in the possibility of supernatural interference with the operation of the course of nature by indulging in special prayers for rain in times of drought; but in such matters actions speak louder than words, and the actions of the responsible authorities indicate that they regard all such appeals to the supernatural as futile and vain. Approval in theory is manifested side by side with contempt in practice. Thus the Minister of Health for the time being may easily attend some ceremonial service at which there are prayers for rain in time of drought, or the Prime Minister of South Africa may order a "day of repentance and prayer"; but the respective Departments in this country and Cape Town proceed to plan the creation of more reservoirs as the sensible method for dealing with the problem in the future, and in their planning they rely not at all on the friendly intervention of some supernatural power with the vagaries of Nature. Even the popular press, so careful not to take up a position likely to be displeasing to organized religion, never dreams of suggesting that any supernatural agency is responsible for the shortage, but instead sensibly rebukes the responsible authorities for not having made adequate provision for the needs of the community. A Metropolitan Water Board which solemnly announced, in reply to criticism at a time of water shortage, that it was praying hard for rain would be met with a veritable howl of derision. The supernatural has been pushed almost completely out of the rainfall business.

It is in like case with harvests. Customs die hard, and it is still the practice, I believe, with most vicars to hold what are called Harvest Thanksgiving Services, in which the ritual is observed of thanking God for the harvest of the year. But there is no longer any real conviction—at least among thinking people—behind this ancient ceremonial. It is upon the application of scientific knowledge and methods that harvests are now known to depend. The proper rotation of crops, the use of the right kind of chemicals for fertilizing purposes, the utilization of the knowledge of the expert at the experimental farm—these are the things which are now understood to count in determining the size of a harvest. The supernatural factor does not enter into the calculations of the modern agriculturist in the least degree.

Actually it is only in the dark hinterland of ignorance, where the sovereignty of knowledge is not conceded, that the supernatural continues to hold unqualified sway. Looking round at the people who genuinely believe in the possibility of miraculous interference with the laws of nature, we find that they have very low intellectual standards. Occasionally,

even in these days, there is solemnly set forth in the news a story of some new "apparition of the Virgin," or some alleged occurrence not to be accounted for by natural means. But invariably this alleged modern miracle will be discovered to have taken place in the backwoods of Belgium, or Italy, or Dalmatia, or some such place where the cultural level is notoriously low. These visions of our own times are never seen in the centres of enlightenment. And even when they make their appearance in some remote rural district the medium appears to be chosen with nice discrimination. It is always some child or adult of very simple mentality to whom the vision is vouchsafed. Like ghosts, these modern holy apparitions flourish only in the dark places, and are seen only by the fondly credulous.

There are, of course, educated and intelligent people who yet profess a belief in the possibility of supernatural interference with the operation of natural laws, but the belief of such persons is of a very qualified character; it is not to be compared with the complete faith of the simple devotee. In the practical affairs of life the intelligent believers relegate the power of the supernatural to a distinctly secondary position. Thus, in time of sickness they may allow the priest to say a few prayers of intercession on their behalf, but their primary reliance is on the best kind of medical knowledge and skill which can be obtained. So it is with the captains of ships at sea. They have no objection to the prayers "for those in peril on the sea"—they may even like them—but they know full well that the safety of their ships depends much more on sound construction and sound navigation than anything else. Faith with these people is in fact a concession to the human desire for a second string to the bow. There is indeed no real belief in the possibility of supernatural interference with the ordinary course of events, but a vague feeling that there is just an outside chance that it may happen, and therefore nothing is lost by making provision for the remote contingency. The educated believers in the supernatural are, in fact, in the position of the horse-betting man who, considering dispassionately the prospects in a given race, decides that the winner is certain to be found among a selected few, yet is worried by the thought that a rank outsider may win after all.

Inside the Churches themselves there exist sharp differences of opinion as to the area in which the supernatural operates. A good deal of territory which is still held by High Anglicans and Roman Catholics to be within the sphere of influence of God has been surrendered by the Modernists to the absolute jurisdiction of natural law. In these days the interference with natural law implicit in the doctrine of the Virgin

Birth does not command the intellectual assent of the Modernist, nor does the belief in the efficacy of prayers for rain, or for the restoration of the sick to health. And it is to be noted, as of primary importance, that division of opinion arises only from a drift away from supernaturalism. There is no existing difference between the Fundamentalist and the Modernist which has been brought about by the fact that the former has become more supernaturalistic while the latter has maintained a stationary position. Wherever these differences exist they will be found to have arisen because the Modernist's belief in the power of the supernatural has weakened, whereas the Fundamentalist either remains in his old position or makes only a partial move in the direction of the Modernist. Such movement as there is, then, is all in one direction, and that is away from the dominion of the supernatural. Looking at the sweep of the human mind as a whole, we discover that its process of escape from belief in the supernatural is not a tidal one of ebb and flow. There is in fact no ebb towards more pronounced supernaturalism, but a constant flow in the other direction. A consideration of contemporary events and issues may incline us to think that the movement is a slow one, but a better measure of its momentum is obtained by a backward glance over the history of the last three or four centuries. Such a period, as we know, is only a fleeting hour in the history of the world, yet within it we discover that reason has made what can be fairly described as stupendous gains over belief in the supernatural. In the light of this undeniable fact he is an impatient Rationalist brother who does not look forward with equanimity and confidence to the final discredit of supernaturalism.

# RELIGION : ITS BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENTS

By SIR ALEXANDER G. CARDEW

**I**T is obvious that we must always be ignorant of the first far-off periods of human existence, but perhaps we may hazard a guess at the plight of our early forefathers. Having at last emerged, after many intermediate stages and vast spaces of time, from the brute world, they were marked out for further advancement by the size and complexity of their brain. But in other respects they were but poorly equipped for the struggle of existence, possessing no formidable apparatus of teeth and claws, and having, as yet, no weapon beyond the stone they could pick up or the branch they might wrench from the tree. They had no shelter unless they could oust some other animal from a cave, and their young were born helpless and required a long period of parental care. Sir Arthur Keith has drawn a telling picture of the hard lot of the primitive savage, engaged ceaselessly in the search for food. Dr. Marett has remarked that he was "excessively liable to disaster."

In such conditions small advantages would turn the scale in favour of or against any human group or family. If such a group was surprised by a rising flood or other natural danger, the impulse of the majority—of what our Marxian friends call the communal mind—might be, like Caliban, to fall flat and hope that the danger would subside. It would be in such a crisis that the keen-witted individual, grasping more clearly than his fellows the necessity for further effort, would rouse them to seek higher ground or to drag children and weaklings into safety. The man whose energy thus saved the band from danger would be its natural leader.

It occasionally happened that some individual mind also gained predominance over the rest by instilling into them a belief in his possession of supernatural power. How the notion of such power first arose is a matter of some controversy. Some see in it an aspect of the belief in a spirit world, which, through dreams or otherwise, seems to have early arisen in savage society. Others think that before spirits were imagined a vague belief grew up in some secret



or hidden power known only to the wizard or wise man of the party. However the notion arose, it contained the germ both of magic and religion. The medicine-man, sorcerer, or shaman who possessed the hidden power could use it to "sing over" a throwing weapon in order to give it extra power in the chase or in war, or to direct the ceremonial dances which initiated the young into the mysteries of the group. Modern scientists, for the purposes of their analysis, have distinguished magic from religion, and have often refused to dignify with the latter title the rites which are celebrated by very early people. But there is no adequate reason to draw any hard-and-fast line between the two processes. In the very earliest traces of human existence we find the dead buried with apparent expectation of a future existence. Magic and religion blend into one in savage life, and there is no sufficient ground for supposing that they represent separate or successive stages of development. In both the possession of some secret and supernatural power is the common denominator.

It is possible that, as Dr. Marett and others think, under primitive conditions these quasi-magical, quasi-religious beliefs conferred some biological advantage. They would impart to their possessors a confidence and a hopefulness that would make for success. When the Magdalenian artist, after due magical procedure, had drawn his picture of the bison with a spear in its heart, his comrades could enter on the chase with an added assurance of killing the desired quarry. The consciousness of common magical or religious preparation would act as a cement to hold the band together, and it would serve as a conservative influence strengthening the hands of the elders, preventing rash innovation, and making the young amenable to lessons in the savage virtues of fortitude and endurance.

The close association of magic and religion is still evident. The two work hand-in-hand to a greater extent than modern religionists admit. The name of magic has become discredited, and a magician now means a conjurer; but one has only to scratch popular religion to find traces of magic in it. The rite of baptism is really a magical procedure to exorcize possible devils from the newly-born member of the community. The eucharist, with its symbolical partaking of the body and blood of the god, is essentially magical, especially when viewed with the literalness enjoined by the Roman Church. Faith-healing is a direct descendant of the medicine man's procedure when he breathes on the patient, as Jesus is represented as doing in some of his cures. Extreme unction has clear analogies in savage practice.

Unfortunately both magic and religion contain within

themselves the seed, or rather the certainty, of abuse. You cannot trust a man with secret and unquestioned power without his coming sooner or later to misuse it, as we see in the modern dictator. The medicine man, whose knowledge of herbs and drugs was useful when he was called in to heal the sick, would be sure some day or other to employ his potions to secure his own ends. The sorcerer who could give a spear a secret potency by his enchantments would soon be induced to use his power for some illicit purpose. The necromancer or priest who could see and converse with spirits would not be human if he did not turn this valuable faculty to his personal advantage. There is indeed ample evidence of how these dealers in secret power do misuse their reputation among savage races, and of the fear they inspire.

As the supernatural beliefs became more complex, gods of anthropomorphic character were invented, uniting human passions with more than human powers, and the priests who served or utilized these gods increased their influence. The idea of sacrifice was introduced, and soon living animals were slaughtered on the altars of the god. The blood of the victim was regarded as of peculiar efficacy, and the necessity of daily offerings became established. Countless numbers of every kind of animal perished at the altar, and man himself was not exempt. Sometimes the idea was adopted that the tears of the victim would fertilize the soil, and he died therefore after cruel tortures. Nothing, it was taught, was too rare or too precious to be offered to the god, so the firstling of the flock was sacrificed, and the climax was reached when human beings offered up their first-born on the altars of the Moloch of Palestine and Libya.

Such revolting developments of the religious complex have disappeared now, except among remote tribes; but even among civilized peoples many survivals remain. In India, which boasts of its spirituality, numbers of beasts are still slaughtered at the shrines of the goddess Kâli, and lesser victims, such as doves and fowls, are offered to every village deity. In Bulgaria, until recent days, lambs and kids were sacrificed on the festival of St. George and on the feast of the Virgin Mary. Up to the end of the last century many such sacrifices were made in Russia. The Chinese, with the characteristic ingenuity of the Far East, have hit on the economical idea of dispatching paper figures, provided with paper money, to serve as attendants on the dead. When, with proper ceremonial, these are burnt, everybody is satisfied at a minimum of expense.

It might be thought that the enlightened West would be able to look down from a superior position on these superstitions, but this hardly proves to be the case. A French-

Canadian paper lately published an advertisement of "Messes Grégoriennes." St. Gregory was worrying himself one day over the unfortunate souls in Purgatory, when *le bon Dieu* approached him and said: "My friend, I am going to confer on you a unique privilege. Every soul in Purgatory for whom shall be said thirty masses in your honour and without interruption shall be immediately delivered from Purgatory, no matter how heavy its debt to me may be; and, more than that, I will not wait till the masses are said: I will deliver the soul directly the cash is paid"—\$50 for thirty masses. Nothing could be more straightforward and business-like, and nothing could be more significant of the state of ignorance in which the population addressed must be kept. Italy is just the same. In the Church of S. Pudenziana in Rome recently there were large placards in Latin and Italian, issued under the authority of the present Pope, offering a remission of three thousand years of Purgatory and one-third of all his sins to each of the faithful visiting the church daily, and especially on certain festivals. The sight of such a document takes us straight back into the Middle Ages. In Great Britain Rome discreetly conceals its tricks and subterfuges and pretends to be civilized and cultured; but when it is at home it shows its unchanging character. We hear too little of what goes on in Catholic countries. It is the mentality carefully fostered by the Church which produces the crowds that each year celebrate the liquification of the holy blood in Naples or Bruges or march in procession with some sacred bone supposed to be that of St. Paul or St. Peter, or some other holy father.

# JULIAN THE APOSTATE

By LLEWELYN POWYS

(Author of *The Pathetic Fallacy*, etc.)

**J**ULIAN the Apostate has always been a baffling figure to historians, both Christian and secular. He was a paradoxical figure, noble and ignoble, rational and irrational. He was what we would now describe as "a character"—a cow with a crumpled horn, a lion disguised as an ass. In some ways he was singularly unfitted for the task he undertook—the task of withstanding that baleful "epidemic of unreason" which in due course became responsible for the Dark Ages.

Julian throughout his life may be said to have remained "a spoilt priest," no amount of oblations by means of the *taurobolium* being found sufficient to wash the lustral waters of Christian baptism from his brow or the aroma of the sacramental Christian wine from his golden goat's beard. He was possessed by a sense of mysticism akin to what Christians profess to feel. Nobody could have been further from the classical state of innocent life-acceptance. He was grossly superstitious, and, despite his chat about King Helios, ill at ease in the sun's solid domain of earth-reality. He was also attracted to all those forms of spiritualism that throughout the centuries have given a spurious consolation to idealistic men and women. It was this same infirmity of mind that prompted him to rejoice at the destruction of the works of Epicurus, and that rendered his excitable strivings against the oriental neurosis which had already obtained so insidious a hold over the senile Roman Empire not altogether satisfactory.

Last week I was talking to a well-known man of letters who has always thought it safe for us to put entire faith in the supernatural. I remarked, as a good village atheist should, that I could never, under any circumstances, believe in God, seeing that so many horrible cruelties took place about me every hour of the day. To my surprise my companion responded to my words with a show of genuine enthusiasm. However, by what he said he revealed only too clearly the indurated theurgic temper of his mind. "I feel," he exclaimed, "exactly as you do, but it is not the slightest use declaring yourself to be an atheist. If you really wish to annoy God

you must be a polytheist. God's prevailing emotion has always been jealousy, and the mere whisper of the suspicion that there might exist other deities than himself throws him into a towering passion." If we should subscribe to this view Julian must most certainly have exasperated the Almighty, for, although he confined his personal adoration to Apollo, Hermes, and Pallas Athene, he would not willingly have had the altars of any semi-demi pagan deity neglected. Indeed, so energetic was he in offering bloody sacrifices that he earned for himself the nickname of "The Slaughterer," and upon his setting out for Persia the young men did not hesitate to buzz after him this quip: "The white cattle to Cæsar, greeting. If you conquer there is an end of us."

Just as certain human beings experience a spiritual shiver at the mere sight of cats, so there have always been those who cannot abide Christians.

The only man that I ever knew  
Who did not make me almost spew  
Was Fuseli: he was both Turk and Jew.  
And so, dear Christian friends, How do you do?

Julian's own antipathy was empiric and congenital. The Christ party had murdered his father and his eldest brother; but, quite apart from any resentment on this score, he felt the utmost contempt for a religion which divided its worship between an anthropomorphic deity, "arbitrary and capricious," and "a dead Jew."

The more he had to do with the Christians the more obnoxious they became to him, with their unseemly rivalries and endless doctrinal wrangles. "Hear me," he cried at one of the synods when his rational arguments were well nigh drowned by their high-pitched, angry voices. "The Franks heard me, the Allemanni heard me." Their morbid preoccupation with churchyard bones was especially distasteful to him. With a considerable show of reason the philosophic Emperor declared this peculiar predilection to be in no way justified by the evidence of the New Testament. "Let the dead bury their dead" had been the words of Jesus, and shining sepulchres in the valley of Jehoshophat were used by him as symbols of corruption. The Christians, Julian affirmed, were disposed to reject all Jewish ritual that interfered with their appetites. "They took to themselves the licence to eat what they wished, and never feared defilement." They combined, so he asserted, "Jewish sauciness" with an unpleasant kind of prurient purity peculiar to themselves.

Julian's attitude to the Jews was an odd one. It is supposed he favoured their fads in order to spite the Christians! Probably he encouraged the abortive attempt to rebuild

Solomon's Temple for some such reason, but this in no way meant that he was averse to exercising his wit upon the "indistinct ravings" to be found in their sacred books. He clearly noted every eccentricity of their Jehovah, and pointed out that his idea of government was an emotional rather than a rational one—a matter of rewards and reprisals rather than of cool, impartial judgments. Also, in sharp contrast with what might have been anticipated from the first civilized resident of Paris, Julian pertly inquired how it came about that God should form a woman as a helpmate to man, knowing well that she would be the cause of Adam's fall, and that her sex from age to age would be little else than a flickering torment to the sons of men. He could not believe that any large-hearted, generous deity would be content to squander "all his favours on one little race in one little corner of the world to the neglect of the rest of mankind." The Decalogue he dubs as unoriginal, and comments on the folly of the Tower of Babel story, asserting that all the clay of the world would not supply enough bricks to reach up to the lowest horn of the crescent moon. He despised the New Testament for quite other reasons. He did not attack the miracles of Jesus for being unreliable fabrications of a crafty and ambitious priesthood, but rather as being themselves mean and paltry prodigies.

There is an essential simplicity in Julian's nature that is pleasing. The devotion he felt for his mother, the Lady Basilina, "withdrawn in the bloom of youth by the motherless maiden Goddess," is touching, as is his affection for his hereditary country home in Bithynia grown over with "bindweed, thyme, meadow grass, and orchards," and rendered cool by innumerable fresh springs of water. His loyalty to his dissolute half-brother Gallus is as moving as it is remarkable when one considers how natural it would have been for lads of such different tastes, shut up together in a lonely Cappadocian Castle, to quarrel. "The Gods preserved him from being corrupted by leading him to philosophy," wrote one historian.

When eventually, at the age of twenty-five, he was summoned by his cousin Constantius to share with him the Imperial purple how characteristic it was that he should have been overheard invoking the name of Plato when trying to learn a wearisome military drill. Truly he was a strange mixture—a pseudo man-of-letters, a pseudo metaphysician, a pseudo soldier who would regularly burn the midnight oil over his literary essays no matter how hazardous the campaign. He was dominated by two authentic passions—an overwhelming admiration for the classical past and an overwhelming desire for fame. It was the strength of the

latter emotion that explains, if it does not justify, the less worthy episodes of his life—such, for instance, as his composition of insincere orations to Eusebia and Constantius, as well as the alacrity with which he accommodated himself to the exactions of the Imperial position.

Julian's values, however, would never have been found but on a high plane, "the last infirmity of a noble mind," whereas his philosophic monitors, such as Maximus of Ephesus, at the first jump of his success wished plain living to the devil and came scrambling through the buttery hatch of his palace.

The young Emperor's stern asceticism is a matter for astonishment, and it is apparently impossible for him to be budged from the narrow path of personal abstinence. As Gibbon remarked, no frightened and tender-eyed female captive was ever conducted to his tent. Nor was he less exacting over the pleasures of the table. When in the north he refused to receive pheasants into his larder on the ground of their being a meat too hot and luxurious, while in his last campaign under a burning desert sun he was content to subsist on a little "thin broth."

Small wonder the voluptuous inhabitants of Antioch, given over to every kind of sensual indulgence, disliked him; but how in keeping it was with the spirit of Julian to content himself with answering their impertinences with a literary essay packed close with humorous sallies against himself. The supercilious manners and fanciful foibles favoured by high society never appealed to the philosophic Emperor, and an ungainliness in his personal deportment would not in any case have allowed him to compete with these people whose accomplishments he despised. He was at home in the dim caves of Mithras or by the high altar of some Greek deity. He felt at ease with the rude, rough rank-and-file of his soldiery, but disliked his ornamental body-guard sent to him by Constantius—"men good for little else than praying." It is significant that he selected for his Imperial Crown a severe "military collar."

He is said to have declared that he never regretted any act of generosity. In his administration he was consistently tolerant. Christians dolefully complained that he studied to deprive them "of the glory of Martyrdom." It is true that when George, the rascally Archbishop of Alexandria, was lynched by the pagan mob, who in a mood of brutal and contemptuous ribaldry bound his corpse to a camel's arse, Julian rebuked the rioters with words only, excusing their excesses on the score of provocation.

This George of Cappadocia had raised himself to his exalted position by cringing and craft, and it was only after

his death that he "assumed the mask of a martyr, a saint, and a Christian hero," so that the far-famed titular saint of England was in actual origin nothing better than a dishonourable bacon-contractor. Julian's general attitude to the Christians, "that miserable parcel of fanatics," is clearly revealed in the following instructions sent out to the governors of the provinces: "In the name of the Gods, I do not desire the Galileans to be killed or beaten contrary to justice, or that they suffer any other evil, but I emphatically assert that God-fearing persons are to receive greater honour; for it is through the Galilean folly that all things have been well nigh overturned." To which St. Athanasius retorted with a confidence, alas, only too well justified: "Let us retire. It is but a small cloud that will soon pass away." Julian once expressed a wish "that all the new doctrines were embodied in Athanasius, so that they might be crushed at one blow." Too clearly he saw the crepuscular fog of superstition that would gather over Europe if the machinations of the Galileans were successful. He urged the Alexandrians to keep clear heads and to reject Christianity out of hand, reminding them of "the ancient lordship of Egypt over Israel."

The Christian bishops had acquired free passes for travelling along his great Imperial trunk roads. These privileges Julian cancelled, and he also forbade Christians to teach the classics in the schools, suggesting that it would be more seemly for them to concentrate their attention upon their own outstanding works—the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke. Gibbon says of Julian: "His pity was degraded by contempt; his contempt was embittered by hatred." He surely could not abide Christian fooling in any of its manifold forms. It was as unpleasing to him as beer, which he regarded as a heady beverage not to be compared with the pure clear wines of Dionysos. Possibly the edict most resented by the Christians was his insistence upon their adopting the name of Galileans in all official dealings. To a sect that aspired to become a universal religion this title, with its provincial connotation, was a deep humiliation, for, as Mr. Martin, the former scholar of Oriel College, Oxford, enthusiastically reminds us in his "S. P. G. book," a summary of the Christian prospects can be found "in a simple historical statement—the Creed."

Certainly there is an incorrigible mental infantilism about the thinking of Julian's pious opponents unto this day. They have even had the audacity to attempt to discredit the notable words of this "last of the Romans" as, at the early age of thirty-two, he lay dying by the strong-flowing River Tigris: "I die without remorse, as I lived without guilt..... Detesting the corrupt and destructive maxims of despotism, I have con-



sidered the happiness of the people as the end of government. ....I now offer my tribute of gratitude to the Eternal Being, who has not suffered me to perish by the cruelty of a tyrant, by the secret dagger of conspiracy, or by the slow tortures of lingering disease. He has given me, in the midst of an honourable career, a splendid and glorious departure from this world; and I hold it equally absurd, equally base, to solicit or to decline the stroke of fate." These inspiring words of the "Good King and mighty warrior" won from the lips of the most enlightened Christian of our times the following disparaging observation: "In the insensibility of conscience, in their ignorance of the very idea of sin.....we recognize the mere philosopher." That  $1+1=\text{guilt}$  has ever been typical of the Christian mind. Indeed, it is from such spiritual disorders that the nervous religion draws its nourishment, just as exotic toadstools in an overshadowed wood draw their prosperity from pieces of buried timber lying in an obscure state of corruption *under ground*. What Heraclitus said years ago of the followers of the mystery religions of his time is surely not inapplicable to our own tribes of mischievous pretenders: "When defiled they purify themselves with blood, just as if one who had stepped in mud were to wash himself in mud." These frenzied idolaters have always practised magical rites of a kind far too sophisticated ever to have been acceptable to the imagination of the heroic poet whom they so fondly claim to have been the Son of God.

# SPECULATIONS

By CHARLES T. GORHAM

**M**AN'S a machine, they say—the scientists,  
The top achievement of the world's huge  
scheme,  
And yet a pretty thing that thinks, and loves,  
And fumes, and struggles, for a few brief years,  
Then passes to the unknown whence he came.

Steps in the Church and tells us all this talk  
Is so much fudge that shames the utterer—  
Base, grovelling, immoral, senseless, false ;  
A thesis none but fools or knaves could broach.  
Says man's immortal, made of grace divine  
Deathless as deity itself, from whom  
His spirit emanates, and in whose light  
Unclouded bliss is his high destiny ;  
Fall'n 'tis true from that idyllic state  
Wherein, a little lower than the angels,  
He dwelt of yore in Eden's peaceful groves—  
Yea, stained with ineradicable sin  
But for God's mercy.

Then, if one but ask  
Who thereby profits, he astonished learns  
'Tis but the few infinitesimal  
Who of His grace escape His endless wrath.

Strange these discordances. Were it a truth  
That man's immortal, doomed to yawning hell  
Unless he gain a problematic heaven,  
Would not that destiny be surely known  
And understood of all men ? Is God just  
If 'tis not made as clear as noonday sun  
To him who chooses what's involved in choice ;  
If every weighty penalty be held  
Outbalanced by exaggerated hope,

The chooser faltering 'midst perplexities  
None of his making?

What art thou, O man,  
That dar'st to question thus Omnipotence ;  
Dispute the will supreme, oppose in pride  
Thy notions vain to wisdom absolute?  
So cry apologists.

But softly now :  
Is this the authentic voice of Deity,  
Or man's faint echo of what's held for truth ?  
Are we compelled to heed all oracles  
That claim to speak for God ? This cannot be.  
In every land and age the soul devout  
Lifts up its voice in all sincerity,  
Yet what results ? A clash of jangled bells,  
Dinnyng their endless discords in our ears,  
A truth to one man, falsehood to his friend,  
One age's highest in the next outgrown.

Then must we ponder, sift, and scrutinize ;  
Judge by that inner light which dimly burns  
In each, by knowledge fanned to living flame.  
Does knowledge then lead us the nigher God ?  
It should be so if He's reality ;  
Yet 'tis the unsophisticated mind  
That seems to nestle closest to bright heaven,  
While knowledge halts, and doubts, and speculates  
If heaven be real or but a thing of dreams.

\* \* \* \* \*

Better a vast machine with man its head,  
Content to know naught of his origin,  
Than fictions which give strength for a brief hour,  
And turn to dead sea fruit within our grasp—  
Joy lost in disenchantment bitterer  
For the fallacious hopes that gave it birth.

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